

**EMPLOYABILITY OF SOCIAL WORK GRADUATES IN THE ZAMBIAN
LABOUR MARKET: A PERSPECTIVE OF UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA
SOCIAL WORK GRADUATES**

BY

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I Jonathan Chitabanta hereby declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. I have given full acknowledgment in the form of citations to the sources used and this thesis has not been submitted or presented for a degree at another University

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DEDICATION

To my family; my mother Susan Chitabanta, my siblings Kasonde, Mulenga, Nathaniel, Sampa, and Charity. To all the social workers who remain unsung heroes despite the enormous work they do in enhancing the wellbeing of people across all walks of life.

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APPROVAL

This dissertation by Chitabanta Jonathan has been approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Master of Social Work Degree by the University of Zambia.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to explore the employability of social work graduates in the Zambian labor market while focusing on what it takes for social work graduates to get employed, strategies used in job search and the underlying motives thereof. This research adopted a hermeneutic phenomenology research approach, which contends to glean on understanding the views of people experiencing employability and fits in well with the Interpretivism which focused on understanding experiences of social work graduates surrounding the phenomena of employability. The sample size was made up of 16 social work graduates from the University of Zambia. Findings revealed that it took; (i) academic qualifications, (ii) work experience, (iii) skills, (iv) individual attributes, (v) religion, (vi) social networks, (vii) belonging to the social work professional body, and (viii) reputation of university for social work graduates to be employed. More or so, when it comes to the actual process of job search and application, job seekers used prescribed job search/application procedures by potential employers such as dropping application letters physically or emailing them to potential employers. Even so, job seekers attested to having their own motives for the preferred strategy such as ‘ease of use’ and ‘improved chances of getting a job using online application or the ‘development of people’s skills and gaining of the much-needed work experience’ that comes with volunteerism. In its most basic sense, graduate employability was understood as that which it took for social work graduates to be work ready and employable. Although graduate employability can be viewed from three different perspectives: employer, graduates and Higher learning institution, his study focused on social work graduates only. Hence, the need for further research involving other stakeholders such as employers and higher learning institutions.

Key words: Graduate, Employability, Job Search, Strategy, Motives, Social Networks, Volunteerism, Social Work,

LIST OF ACRONYMS

DSW	Department of Social Welfare
IFSW	International Federation of Social Workers
MCDSS	Ministry of Community Development and Social Services
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNZA	University of Zambia
CBU	Copperbelt University
LCMS	Living Conditions Monitoring Survey
IHL	Institutions of Higher Learning
TAVETA	Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Authority
GRZ	Government Republic of Zambia
SNDP	Seventh National Development Plan
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HCT	Human Capital Theory

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The development of employability attributes has been a key feature of academic programmes for a number of years. Most literature acknowledges the definition of graduate employability given by (Yorke, 2008). Yorke describes graduate employability as a set of achievements - skills, understandings and personal attributes - that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy. Bunt et al. (2005) referred to graduate employability as skills that cut horizontally across all industries and vertically across all jobs from entry level to chief executive officer. Employers regard employability as 'work readiness', whereby the graduate should possess the skills, knowledge, attitudes and commercial understanding that will enable them to make productive contributions to organizational objectives soon after assumption of duty (Mason et al., 2006). On the basis of the above definitions, employability seems tranquil and understandable. Quiet the contrarily, most people find it hard to understand and tend to liken it to and interchange it with the concept of employment when in fact the two concepts are different.

Thus, Lees, (2002) submits that the distinction between employability and employment is that the latter means having a job, whilst the former refers to the capacity of the graduate to function in a job and be able to move between jobs, thus remaining employable throughout their life. When contextualized to the Zambian labour market, there are inadequate scientific studies that have been undertaken on employability specifically of social work graduates and using the perspectives of social work graduates themselves. Review of available literature indicates that the aforesaid gap exists in scientific knowledge. The information that is available is dominated by literature from the global north and a handful literature from a few countries from the global south (Ariyawansa, 2008; Brown, Chandrasiri, 2008; Copps, J. & Plimmer, 2013).

Even so, background information from the Living Conditions Monitoring Survey (LCMS) of 2004 and 2010, shows the labor force being dominated primary school education at (69 percent). Junior secondary school was the next most common category (21 percent) while the proportion of those senior secondary education stood at (9 percent) (LCMS, 2010). Those with university degrees (both undergraduate and graduate) by 2013 made up approximately (1 percent) of the labour force.

However, the proportion of those with university degrees increased dramatically to approximately 5 percent. This is indicative of the demand for these qualifications by both individuals and companies and is in line with the increased enrolment in tertiary institutions (Moonoa and Rankin, 2013). The demand of tertiary education resulted in most graduates between the period of 2000 and 2010 to be employed immediately after graduation and progress to professional and managerial jobs upon completion of their undergraduate studies (Education and Employment in Zambia, 2013). Nonetheless, there have been a lot of changes in both the education sector with regards to the number of graduates produced every year and the available job opportunities. This leaves questions into the perspective of employability, as to how smoothly graduates get employed, what exactly makes graduates employable and what strategies they use to enter the labor market.

Not until recently, the country only had two main universities: The University of Zambia and the Copperbelt University, both public. However, in order to increase access to tertiary education, the government encouraged the establishment of private universities. This led to the establishment of over 14 private universities by 2009 and an ambitious plan for additional public universities (Moonoa and Rankinb, 2013:10). Until the recent introduction of private universities and the conversion of some private colleges into universities, competition for entry into the two public universities was extremely high resulting in very few high school students entering university. This meant that the number of University graduates had remained fairly low in most disciplines (Education and Employment in Zambia, 2013). Enrolment rates are growing though in the period from 2005 till 2009 total enrolment in public universities increased by almost 50 percent, from 12,774 in 2005 to 19,086 in 2009 (GRZ, SNDP, 2011). Total enrolment in universities and TEVET institutions was 52,485 in 2009 and universities have increased their share in post-secondary enrolment from 30 to 36 percent, indicating a movement from vocational to more academic training (Moonoa and Rankinb, 2013).

The expansion of the universities has intensified competition over scarce jobs (Brown & Hesketh, 2004). As of 2020, there were 9 registered public institutions and 54 registered private institutions in Zambia producing graduates (Higher Education Authority, 2020). Arguably the expansion of higher education has extended the inflationary effects throughout the graduate population meaning that graduates who are able to access the right social networks, who embody the right forms of

being and doing and who have access to economic resources required to invest time and effort in unpaid experiences, are best positioned to secure a competitive labour market advantage.

Overall, industry feedback is centered on the lack of modern relevant skills among higher education graduates, social workers included. This confirmed in the Seventh National Development Plan (2017) which indicates that Zambia suffers a skilled-worker gap caused by the mismatch between the skills offered by training institutions and those demanded by industry (SNDP, 2017:79). This reveals a lack of linkages between industry and education sector providers. Industry experts confirm that most higher education graduates have the theoretical knowledge but lack the hands-on skills that the industry requires (Moonoa and Rankinb, 2013). The search for properly qualified graduates with the relevant skills is usually daunting, and when found, usually costly.

In today's competitive and challenging global world with diverse demands, Zambia is facing serious problems of graduate unemployment (Adesina, 2013). Unemployment Rate in Zambia increased to 13.20 percent in 2019 from 11.40 percent in 2018. In actual figures 504007 persons in both rural and urban areas are unemployed (Central Statistics Office, 2019). As a result, the higher education sectors are under immense pressure from governments, employers and parents to produce quality graduates that can be economically engaged at the individual, national and global level (Teichler, 2007). Such graduates should possess a combination of attributes that will enable them to take an adaptive and proactive approach to their careers (Bezuidenhout, 2011). While there is consensus worldwide on the importance of addressing employability within higher education, there remains some debate on how best this can be achieved (Harvey, and Morey, 2002).

Although many countries are faced with problems of unemployment in general (Adesina, 2013), the scope of this paper is limited to graduate employability with a focus on Social work graduates. A graduate here refers to someone who has a bachelor's or higher degree from a higher education institution (HEI). The rationale for focusing on graduate employability arises from the realization that governments, employers and communities are increasingly interested in what HEIs have to offer as a source of recruitment and for the development of existing employees (Keech, 2006). In part, this has been driven by a growing awareness of the potential of HEIs in the development of knowledge-based economies and driving innovation and national development (Escrigas 2008).

1.1.1 A Focus on Social Work

Social work is one of the oldest professions in Zambia, and Zambia has been producing social work graduates even before the University of Zambia (UNZA) was established in 1966. The Department of Social Work and Sociology is one of the oldest departments in the University and the School of Humanities and Social Sciences. It is as old as the University of Zambia itself. Despite social work being the oldest profession in the country, there is neither literature done concerning the employability of social work graduates in the Zambian labor market nor information regarding the niche of social work practice in Zambia.

Instead, most existing literature in Zambia has focused on the aspects of social protection programs such as social cash transfer scheme (Todd, 2008); with limited attention on the expertise of social work graduates and their employability in the current Zambian labor market. Hence, this study explores the employability of Social Work graduates in the Zambian labor Market from the perspective of Employers and Graduates themselves.

1.1.2 Graduate Employability

Over the last two decades there has been an increasing emphasis on the contribution of the graduate workforce to the economy and the employability of graduates (Rae, 2007). This section will discuss what is meant by employability and why some issues regarding the employability of social work graduates may differ from the employability of graduates in general. There is debate as to the meaning of the term employability; at a basic level employability can be defined as obtaining a job (Maltby, 2011), however, Rothwell (2017) argues that employability should not be confused with the acquisition of a job but “the capacity of the graduate to function in a job and be able to move between jobs, thus remaining employable throughout their life”. It is imperative to recognize that employability is a complex concept which can be interpreted in many ways. In fact, the employability concept is best understood as being subjective and individual, fortified by concepts of identity and practices (Paterson, 2017).

Hillage and Pollard (1998: 12) provide a broad definition of employability as: "the capability to move self-sufficiently within the labour market to realize potential through sustainable employment Building upon the work of Hillage and Pollard (1998), Yorke and Knight (2006) defined employability as “a set of achievements skills, understandings and personal attributes that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations,

which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy” (p. 3). Yorke and Knight's (2006) definition of employability is widely accepted among researchers (Dacre Pool & Qualter, 2013), and is holistic as it covers skills, achievements, personal success and portrays employability as a continuous process of improvement. Furthermore, Yorke and Knight's (2006) definition aligns with the purpose of this research; that is to explore the employability of Social Work graduates in the Zambian labour Market from the perspective of Graduates from the university of Zambia. Unlike other social science graduates, social work is a profession which makes them different from other graduates.

For social work graduates in Zambia, direct roles are expected to begin with practice within the realms of primary methods of social work. These methods are participatory in nature and involve working with individuals, group and community. Secondary methods are both participatory and non-participatory to be used for the benefit of society at large (Wantz & Firman, 2011). Non-participatory in the sense that they do not solve individual problems directly but rather more proactive in creating an enabling environment at a broader level through policy formulation and implementation that cover and seek to enhance human wellbeing. Therefore, the role of a social worker is widened for the betterment of individual, group and community. Social workers may play varying roles ranging from being a change agent, mediator, and enabler among other roles in different contexts and at different times in their career. This sometimes leads to confusion about what it is that social workers do and can also contribute to negative perceptions about the profession.

Just like in other countries, ‘the profession of social work in Zambia has a varied nature in that people can hold the same title of social worker while working in vastly different locations and capacities. It has also evolved throughout the years and has become increasingly professional since its origin (Rinehart, 2013). In an ideal sense, the practice of social worker can be easily understood but in practical sense, there is a gap in knowledge as little is known on the nature and scope of social work practice in the Zambian labor Market. Given these factors, it is difficult for the University of Zambia among other universities producing social work graduates to provide comprehensive training suitable and amenable to the Zambian labour market and also to gain an accurate understanding of what the indigenous profession of social work encompasses.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Just like other higher learning graduates across different fields in the world, social work graduates enroll into university of Zambia with a mandate to gain necessary knowledge, skills and attributes that make them work ready and employable (Tymon, 2013). However, employers continue to report that graduates are not ready for the world of work, and lack some of the most basic skills needed for successful employment (SNDP, 2017:79). Research into why this might be abounding from the perspectives of social work graduates themselves is insubstantial (Dacre Pool and Sewell, 2007; Tymon, 2013), as the views of social work graduates who are recipients of this employability development, are unknown. Despite, the department of social and sociology at the University of Zambia offering social since 1966 and having embedded skills development, and courses such as ‘field placement I and II’ in the learner’s curriculum which facilitates gaining of practical experience (Nyimbiri, 2019), it is yet to be established empirically, what it takes for social work graduates to get a job in Zambia as well as the strategies they use to enter the labor market with its underlaying motives thereof. Therefore, the study was aimed at addressing this gap in knowledge of social work graduate employability.

1.3 Delimitation

Despite the high unemployment levels being faced in Zambia (Adesina, 2013), were in actual figures 504007 persons in both rural and urban areas are unemployed (Central Statistics Office, 2019), this dissertation is limited at understanding the employability of social work graduates in the Zambian labor market from the perspective of social work graduates from the university of Zambia. The rationale for focusing on employability arises from the realization that governments, employers and communities are increasingly interested in what HEIs have to offer as a source of recruitment and for the development of existing employees (Keech, 2006).

1.4 Research Objectives

1.4.1 General Objective

- To understand employability from the perspective of social work graduates in the Zambian Labor Market.

1.4.2 Specific Objective

1. To understand the lived experiences of social work graduates regarding what it takes to be employed

2. To find out from the point of view of social work graduates the strategies they use to get a job.
3. To understand the motives for the utilized job, search strategies.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What does it take to get a job as a graduate of social work in the Zambian labor market?
2. What are the strategies University of Zambia Social Work graduates currently utilizing to enter the labor market?
3. What are the motives for the utilized job search strategies?

1.6 Rational of the Study

The findings from this study helps in addressing the gaps and expand on the scientific knowledge of on-going global scientific debates on graduate employability and existing theories on employability by providing empirical evidence regarding employability of social work graduates. It also provides insight on the nature and diversity of social work practice in the Zambian labor market. This study focused on social work graduates from the university of Zambia. This is because the university of Zambia is the largest producer of social workers in Zambia dating as far back as 1966 and social worker's perspectives were crucial when it comes to giving insight as weather the skills they obtain in class are useful in social work practice (Zambian labor market) and as well as providing insight about the transition of graduates from university into work place.

CHAPTER TWO

The previous chapter presented the context of the study, while chapter two provides a review of theories that are amenable to explaining the employability of social work graduates in the Zambian

labor market. Human capital theory was applied in this study to describe and explain the relationship between educational attainment and labor market outcomes and hence form basis of this research.

2.1 Human Capital Theory

Human capital theory formally evolved in the 21st century, but its bona fide conceptualization was announced in 1960 by Theodore Schultz articulated (Kiker, 1968). The most prominent economists to address issues of human capital were Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill, and Alfred Marshall (Scott, 1996). Irving Fisher, prominent in his own right, expressed the pivotal arguments connecting early economic thought to contemporary human capital methodologies. In 1776, Smith published his "Inquiry" concerning national wealth. His opening paragraphs prescribed that human effort lies at the root of all wealth: "The annual labour of every nation is the fund which originally supplies it with all the necessaries and conveniences of life which it annually consumes, and which consist always either in the immediate produce of that labour, or in what is purchased with that produce from other nations" (Sweetland, 1996:343). It was further argued that the number of useful and productive labourers, is everywhere in proportion to the quantity of capital stock which is employed in setting them to work, and to the particular way in which it is so employed (Smith, 1952).

What 'hereafter appeared' were Smith's two principal components, which serve as the foundation of all productive human capital frameworks: (1) Labour inputs are not merely quantitative (Sweetland, 1996:343). They qualitatively include "the acquired and useful abilities of all the inhabitants or members of the society" (p. 119) as well as "the state of the skill, dexterity, and judgement with which labour is applied" (p. 1). (2) Ability acquired through "education, study, or apprenticeship, always costs a real expense, which is a capital fixed and realized, as it were, in person" (Smith, 1952: 119).

Arguably, human-capital theory is a modern extension of Adam Smith's explanation of wage differentials by what is commonly referred to as the net (dis)advantages between different employments (Dictionary of Sociology, 1998). Furthermore, Adam Smith defined four types of fixed capital (which is characterised as that which affords a revenue or profit without circulating or changing masters). The four types were: useful machines, instruments of the trade; buildings as

the means of procuring revenue; improvements of land; and fourthly the acquired and useful abilities of all the inhabitants or members of the society (Crook, et al, 2011).

The fourth characteristic (acquired and useful abilities of all the inhabitants or members of the society) of human capital proposed by Adam Smith that the modern theorists such as Taylor, et al., 2012; and Rauch and Rijsdijk, 2013 extended on. According to Rauch and Rijsdijk (2013), human capital “consists of the skills and knowledge that individuals acquire through their investments in schooling, on-the-job training, and other types of experiences” (p. 925). Employability skills such as analytical skills, problem solving skills, and communication skills are part of human capital and have increasingly become valued by employers (Kundaali, 2015; Taylor, Haux, & Pudney, 2012). Generally, human capital theory shows that education and skills lead to stable employment, more productivity, higher earnings, as well as reducing the overall risk of poverty and unemployment (Cai, 2012; Taylor et al., 2012). Education in this case offers a platform for a social learning environment where learners could learn relevant skills through social interaction with educators, peers and surroundings.

Consequently, there are two forms of human capital identified in literature: general and specific human capital. General human capital refers to generic skills such as problem solving, motivation, knowledge and self-confidence (Rauch & Rijsdijk, 2013). Specific human capital refers to skills that are occupation relevant and are often a result of education and work experience in that particular field (Popovic, 2012; Rauch & Rijsdijk, 2013).

Human capital theory stresses the significance of education and training as the key to participation in the new global economy (Almendare, 2011). Human capital theory rests on the assumption that formal education is highly instrumental and necessary to improve the productive capacity of a population. In short, human capital theorists argue that an educated population is a productive population (Babalola, 2003; Tran, 2015).

The provision of formal education is seen as an investment in human capital, which proponents of the theory have considered as equally or even more worthwhile than that of physical capital Woodhall, 1997 as cited by (Almendare, 2011). Arguably, an individual's participation in higher education is viewed as an investment which will result in longer-term labour market gains. Such an investment will also carry through across the lifetime of the individual. One of the main features of the human capital approach is the linear relationship between investment in education and

economic return: increases in skill and knowledge through education lead to increases in earnings (Bridgstock, 2009; Rauch and Rijsdijk, 2011; Kundaali, 2015).

Generally, the human capital theory is concerned with the wholesome adoption of the policies of education and development. With regard, the human capital theorists such as Adam Smith (1976) and Becker (1987) argue that an educated population is a productive population. Human capital theory emphasises how education increases the productivity and efficiency of workers by increasing the level of cognitive stock of economically productive human capability, which is a product of innate abilities and investment in human beings. By implication, the provision of formal education is seen as a productive investment in human capital, which the proponents of the theory have considered as equally or even more equally worthwhile than that of physical capital (Taylor et al, 2012; Kundaali, 2015).

The human capital theory has been used before in many instances to study graduate employability and also linked to education. For instance, Kundaali (2015) used the human capital theory to study the individual factors affecting the employability of information systems graduates in Cape Town, South Africa from the perspective of employed graduates and employer perspectives. Similarly, the theory was used recently to study the 'Perceptions of factors that affect employability amongst a sample of final-year students at a rural South African university' (Harry et al, 2018). Furthermore, the human capital theory has been linked to employability in many more studies done by Sumanasiri et al, 2015 Smith et al, 2015; Finch et al, 2013; Wickramasighe & Perera, 2010; Booth & Katic, 2011; Popovic, 2012; Rauch & Rijsdijk, 2013.

Likewise, in this study, the validity of the human capital theory was in its use as a looking glass used in understanding the skills that social work graduates gain from education and how the skills transcend into tools of gaining stable employment, more productivity, higher earnings, as well as reducing the overall risk of poverty and unemployment high performance in the labour market. Recognising the positive impact of higher education for social work graduates on the development of individuals' competences and the inherent capabilities developed during the student life (Allen et al., 2009). Of key importance to the study was individual's attainment of higher education which resonates in longer-term labour market gains.

Hence, the theory was valuable in describing the linear relationship between investment in education and individual graduate benefits: increases in skill and knowledge through education

lead to gainful employment and ultimately increases in earnings (Trostel, Walker, & Woolley, 2002). Similarly, this theory helped in understanding how social work graduates mobilize individual labour market advantage based on their education. The process of participating in higher education not only provides individuals with the raw technical knowledge and skills needed for professional forms of labour, but also crucial cultural resources which place them at an advantage to those who have not experienced such a process (Tran, 2015).

However, it is also important to notice that university education is an investment for not only an individual but the university and society's economy (Almendare, 2011). This theory postulates that universities provide and match students with skills and credentials they need to engage with the labour market to fill the jobs which only those with the highest qualification and skills can take (Kundaali, 2015). In understanding this postulation in relation to the current study, the skills that social work students gain from their studies help them to get employed in a paid job. At societal level, human capital contributes to society's knowledge.

Although human capital theory has been used in a number of empirical studies (Booth & Katic, 2011; Popovic, 2012; Rauch & Rijdsdijk, 2013), it has been criticised for its assumptions that education contributes to worker productivity (Cai, 2012). Despite the leveled criticisms, the theory remains relevant in understanding the phenomena and linking education to and labour productivity as well as explaining factors surrounding graduate employability. In fact, modern economists argue that education and health care is the key to improving human capital and ultimately increasing the economic outputs of the nation (Becker, 1993; Bridgstock, 2009; Harry, Chinyamurindi, & Mjoli, 2018).

2.2 Conclusion

The human capital theory has dominated our understanding about the relationship between participation in Higher Education and labour market outcome. This chapter has provided a review of the human capital theory that is agreeable to explaining the employability of social work graduates in the Zambian labour market. The next chapter provides a review of literature that are amenable to explaining the employability of social work graduates in the Zambian labour market, the nature and diversity of social work practice, individual factors influencing social work graduate employability and extent to which learning institutions equip the students with relevant skills that are required by the; hence justifying the need for the study.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Having set out theoretical positions in the previous chapter, this chapter reviewed the extant literature related to graduate employability. This is for the purpose of gaining insight into the phenomena of employability. Many of the studies in this area have been undertaken in the

developed countries particularly the United Kingdom, United States, Germany/South Korea, and the Nordic countries. Few studies have also been undertaken in the sub-Saharan African countries such as Ghana, Nigeria, and South Africa. In order to review this literature, the chapter is divided into four sections. The first section focuses on how literature was searched in the databases. The next three sections reflect the dominant themes that emerged from the literature. The first of these themes focuses on; the concept of employability from the perspective of graduates; secondly on strategies used by graduates to enter the labour market; and thirdly on individual factors and attributes influencing graduate employability.

3.1 Data Gathering Techniques

Peer reviewed articles and eBooks were accessed from the University of Zambia library databases. These included: materials obtained from databases in the form of academic journals and articles, reports, e-books and documents published by international organizations. Many databases were utilized, among which included: Google Scholar, Science Direct, JSTOR, SAGE journals, and Emerald Management journals. The following search terms were used, meaning of employability, graduate employability, graduate, individual factors affecting graduate employability, social work profession, nature of social work practice, roles and skills of a social worker, employment, unemployment phenomenology and qualitative research. A review of the most recent literature (last decade) was made with few exceptions for certain literature which despite not being current were relevant to the study.

3.1.1 The Concept of employability from the perspective of Graduates

The expansion of higher education (HE) participation in many countries in recent decades has led to increasing interest by researchers and policy-makers in the ‘education-to-work’ transition of new graduates and the extent to which they are readily ‘employable. The concept of employability affects both individuals and society at large (Kundaali, 2015). Tymon (2013) argues that higher education is not a guarantee to a high-paying job, but it enhances employability. Employability is a multifaceted concept that has both internal and external facets (Hooley, 2017). However, it is essential to focus on individual perceptions, which are influenced by both internal and external facets (Rothwell & Arnold, 2007). Internal facets involve aspects such as academic performance, students’ ambition and confidence. External dimension involves features such as university reputation, the field of study credibility and demand for the field of study (Paterson, 2017).

The employability concept is best understood as being subjective and individual, fortified by concepts of identity and practices (Paterson, 2017). It appears that individual experiences shape the work outcomes of graduates. This view was highlighted by Tomlinson (2007) who conducted a qualitative study involving 53 final year undergraduate students in the United Kingdom on their perception of employability and their future career progression. The study revealed that students had developed individualized narratives of their future career progression. Concerning individual perceptions of employability, this shows that students had constructed individual identities (Tomlinson, 2007). The study has one major contribution in shaping the way employability is understood by bringing out the concept of employability as being individualistic in the way it is perceived and understood by final year students who eventually become graduates. Thus, the perceptions of students can be explained as their beliefs or attitude. However, the study focused on final year students and it does not highlight commonalities in how they perceive and understand employability and whether this perception changes as they become graduates.

Similarly, Linda and Jackson's, (2013) study explored employability in UK at the University of Liverpool from the perspective of the business school graduates. The critical realist philosophy was adopted for this research, which supports the implementation of a multiple case study methodology, utilising mixed data collection methods. Employing this approach, three key employability stakeholder perspectives were collected and analysed: graduates, curriculum developers and employers. A fourth stakeholder view, the policy makers, was obtained from secondary sources comprising of recent policy documents. Addressing the four stakeholder perspectives assisted in the acquisition of a holistic understanding of the graduate employability concept. This facilitated the connection of the graduate perspective to those of the other stakeholders, which was lacking in the employability literature (Andrews & Higson, 2008). Findings highlighted the importance of the type of institution attended, employer focuses upon behaviours over skills, and the significance of the prevailing economic climate. Nonetheless, the findings of the study cannot be generalized to social work graduates as it solely focused on graduates from business school.

However, in an extended discussion of the employability concept, Hillage and Pollard (1998:85) put more emphasis on individuals possessing the capability "*to move self-sufficiently within the labour market to realise potential through sustainable employment*". In a similar vein, Harvey and

Morey (2003) highlight the skills graduates need in order to manage their own careers and those that will enable them to continue learning throughout their working lives. Mncayi (2016) buttressed this view in the study conducted in South Africa that highlighted institution attended, skills developed at school, graduate profile, credentials, attitude, and labor market strategies as being key employability aspects. He further perceived a lack of labour market knowledge and a lack of self-confidence as reasons for unemployment (Council on Higher Education [CHE], 2016; Mlatsheni, 2014; Mncayi, 2016; Reddy et al., 2016).

Most recently, another study was done by Harry et al. (2018) in South Africa on the perceptions of factors that affect employability amongst a sample of final-year students at University of Fort Hare. The overall objective of this research was to explore final-year students' perceptions of factors that affect employability. This was amongst a sample of students that were enrolled at Fort Hare University. The research made use of an interpretivist, qualitative research approach using an exploratory research design adopted to explore student perceptions and concerns of employability. Focus-group interviews were used as a data gathering technique amongst 30 final-year students about to exit the university system. The findings showed a set of six factors were perceived to influence employability: (1) poor socio-economic status, (2) a poor education system, (3) curriculum issues, (4) the choice of higher education institution and (5) social connections to which the student belongs to (Harry et al., 2018). This study provides an understanding of the complex issues facing potential graduates through lived experiences and an understanding of student perceptions towards employability. However, the study only focused on final year students and not graduates which is a point of departure for the current study which looks at how social work graduates perceive employability in the current labour market of Zambia.

With particular interest to the Zambian context, a similar study was conducted in Zambia by Moono (2013) that focused on the link between education and employment. Data was collected from different stakeholders including government officials, and business managers. Findings showed that the quality of the Zambian school system is poor compared to other countries within the region. Despite which on average, businesses in Zambia are unlikely to report that skills are a constraint for them and are unlikely to engage in their own training. When it comes to 'employability', skills training requirements are heterogeneous across sectors in the Zambian labour market (Moono, 2013). Even though the study was instrumental in showing a link between

education and employment in the Zambian labour market, it does not specify what types of skills are considered important when it comes down to graduate employability. Likewise, the study did not focus on employability and how it is perceived by social work graduates or any other graduates in Zambia. This is a point of departure for the current study in that it will bring out the concept of graduate employability from the perspective of social work graduates.

3.1.2 Individual Factors and Attributes Influencing Graduate Employability

Many scholars such Shah, Rajanibala, 2014; Finch, D.J., Hamilton, L.K., Baldwin, R. and Zehner, M. 2013; and Abdullah-Al-Mamun, 2012; argue that soft skills are of significant importance in the search for employment. In highlighting what soft skills are Lafer (2004) argues that soft skills are individual attributes such as discipline, loyalty and punctuality which are not skills that one either possesses or lacks; they are measures of commitment that one chooses to give or withhold based on the conditions of work offered. Regardless, soft skills are an important part of any job, and tend to influence graduate employability (Barski, 2012).

This view is buttressed by Abdullah-Al-Mamun, (2012) who comments that soft skills are not taught formally and even harder to assess in the classroom. For example, personal attributes, attitudes to work and individual qualities are extremely difficult to evaluate and, in practice, proxies are used. In the study conducted in Europe by Abdullah-Al-Mamun, (2012) which aimed at providing an overview of the growing concern among the employers for graduate soft skills in the workplace, thus looked into the importance of soft skills, soft skills hunted by employers, soft skills lacking in graduates, mismatch of the soft skills and different aspects of soft skills to teach and assess by the educators.

Results of the study showed that the skills that influence graduate employability include; communication, problem solving, team working, an ability to improve personal learning and performance, motivation, judgment, leadership and initiative skills (Department for Education and Employment, 2000; and Abdullah-Al-Mamun, 2012). Employers commented that graduates who entered the job market today are lacking in these soft skills (Woo, 2012). In the current labour market, employers look for these skills and attributes when recruiting as a way of predicting success in the workplace (Philpot, 2012). In recent years there has been a dramatic shift in the skills required by the employers by privileging soft skills over the technical skills (Judhi et al,

2012). The shift, as Payne (2000) notes, is from technical skill to personal attributes and it is these soft skills that are now, at least rhetorically, most in demand by employers.

A study by Kundaali (2015) in South Africa that focused on individual factors that employability found that career development learning, experience (work and life), degree subject knowledge, skills and understanding, generic skills, emotional intelligence, self-confidence and reflection and evaluation affected one's employability. This was a qualitative study that involved 19 participants using focus group and in-depth interviews. Similarly, Andrews and Higson (2010) conducted a study in Europe that sought to investigate graduate employability, 'soft skills' versus 'hard' business knowledge. Utilising semi-structured interview techniques, a total of fifty people were interviewed across all four countries (UK, Austria, Slovenia and Romania), thirty business graduates and twenty employers. Findings revealed what is considered as graduate employability 'core components' as: the value of hard business-related knowledge and skills; the importance of soft-related skills and competencies; and the need for prior work-experience. Entrancingly, a study in Zambia by Moono, (2013) on education and employment in Zambia showed that there is a link between education and employment and emphasizes skills training requirements as being heterogeneous across sectors in the Zambian labour market (Moono, 2013). However, the study neither focused on graduate employability nor specified what types of skills are considered important when it comes down to graduate employability.

The geographic area of residents of graduates' also plays an important role in the job search. The graduates from urban areas or cities have many more opportunities to participate in job fairs to network and develop connections. According to the theory of job search in labor economics, one of characteristics of labor market is information asymmetry, namely, the employers do not know about the potential employees and the job searchers do not know who is recruiting (Cahuc et al., 2006). The advantages of living in big cities are that graduates have more chances to search for jobs through job fairs. These advantages overcome the disadvantage of information asymmetry of the labor market. Moreover, established organizations need many new recruits when they expand through subsidiaries in big cities (Jun, 2017). Therefore, the graduates may have more opportunities than their counterparts living in remote rural areas of the country.

3.1.3 Strategies Used by Graduates to Enter the Labour Market and underlying Motive thereof

When it comes to searching and finding jobs, a number of questions have been raised and yet reviewed literature indicates that it one of the most under-researched topics within labour-market analyses. Spokane and Hawks (1990, p. 111) conclude from their review of the literature that *“perhaps the most understudied area in contemporary career development is the job search”*. While Sverre (2005) in the ‘Journal of Socio-Economics’ postulates how labour-market entrants are able to choose from different kinds of job search methods such as applying through the internet, responding to direct employer job advertisements, and searching through the employment services. Others use informal search methods through social bonds such as friends and relatives.

Focusing on the role of social networks and connections in educational elite’s labour market entrance as one of the key strategies identified by Sverre (2005), Tholen et al., (2013), conducted a study investigating how social networks and connections aid educational elites to gain entrance into the upper echelons of the graduate labour market in two countries: France and England. Using interview data from final year students from two elite higher education institutions, Science Po and the University of Oxford, it was assessed whether their elite educational experiences translated into social networks and connections that aided their future labour market positions. The findings revealed that in both countries’ students had extensive opportunities to familiarize themselves with elite employers and create useful networks. In addition, students frequently arranged exclusive internships to seek future opportunities. The students further argued that these social networks and connections are inherent to the elite educational experiences and helped in the credentialisation of the graduate labour market. The findings of the study reveal that for the elite students interviewed, networks and connections play a very important role in finding employment. Both English and French students were well-aware of the need to use and develop their social networks and connections Tholen et al., (2013).

Furthermore, another study conducted in the United States US focusing on university of Kansas alumni by Coonfield (2012) on job search patterns of college graduates revealed that the utility of educational credentials depends largely on social capital, suggesting that (1) social capital facilitates the job search; (2) the use of social capital varies because some graduates utilize networks to find jobs, while others do not; (3) students from higher social status backgrounds

depend on and utilize social capital to a greater extent than those from lower social status backgrounds; and (4) students with higher social status enjoy the benefits of social capital to the extent that in many cases their college degree and job need not be consistent. The purpose of this study was to explore (1) how the job search transpires for recent college graduates, (2) how potential social networks in a higher educational context, like Kansas University, may make a difference for students with lower social status, and (3) how race and class structure social networks and influence job search patterns. The data for this study was based on Kansas University graduates from 2000 to 2011, who came from high schools across Colorado, Illinois, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Texas.

By integrating qualitative interviews with quantitative data, this study sheds new light on the role of social capital in the job search, revealing that race and class largely determine how college graduates utilize their credentials and connections in the job search. Existing literature on occupational attainment addresses the effects of educational credentials on success in the labor market. Insights from the sociology of organizations and work suggest that while education is important to occupational attainment, networks can be just as important, if not more important than credentials. Variation in credentials is considered particularly significant in accounting for differences in occupational mobility and stratification. However, the effect of educational background on the job search and occupational attainment is likely to be contingent on social network ties, or social capital (Coonfield, 2012).

Similarly, study conducted by Harper, (2008) in the United States of America (USA) realizes the intended outcomes of high-achieving African American male undergraduates to social capital as an important aid to labour market entrance. Many other similar studies have been done by Gardner and Barnes, 2007; Martin, 2009; Kwon and Adler, 2014; Hollenbeck et al., 2017; in which the key emerging themes have been; Socialization for the professional role, social capital, social networking, social networks and connections. In all of these, social networks sometimes referred to social capital is being emphasized as a means for gaining a competitive advantage in graduate job search. Despite the concerted emphasis on the importance of social networks and connections in helping graduates enter the labour market, the majority of research that look at the roles of networks and connections have used quantitative methods to show the role 'social networks' and connections thus results have not been explained in depth. Most importantly, they have not focused

on uncovering or giving a voice to the participants. The current study will elicit the perspectives of the participants so as to glean a nuanced understanding of the strategies they use to find employment.

Equally, Hensvik and Skans (2013) in their study in Nordic countries on ‘Networks and youth labor market entry’ supports existing knowledge regarding the role played by social networks in the process where young workers are matched to employing firms. Most importantly, they add that internships during the course of studies and prior work experience tend to be instrumental job stretch strategy. Hensvik and Skans (2013) used a quantitative survey method in studying youth labour market entry and argued that graduates who worked at a particular establishment during the year preceding graduation were 35 percentage points more likely to find a job. The magnitudes of these effects were non-trivial: graduates who had a summer/extra job at a particular establishment had 35 percentage-points higher probability to find a stable job there compared to other students from the same class; and they had 4 percentage points higher probability to end up in an establishment where someone from the summer/extra job had moved. In addition, the employment rate of graduates was estimated to increase by at least 14 percentage points if all high school job contacts were employed relative to a case where none of the contacts were employed (Hensvik and Skans, 2013). As much as the study brings out the role of internships into perspective of graduate job search strategy, it does not give graduates a voice to explain how internships facilitate job search it relied on a set of pre-set quantitative measures.

Gault et al. (2010) also conducted a similar study to show the effects of business internships on job marketability from the employers' perspective in the USA. The study aimed to identify the value that employers attribute to internships as a qualification for employment and as a factor in determining compensation. The study presents the results of a survey of 185 employers of 392 interns enrolled in an AACSB-accredited business college in a Northeastern US university. The survey examined the perceived value of the internship experience, the effect of intern performance on internship value perceptions, and the relationship between internship participation and employer selection and compensation decisions. The survey results indicated significantly more full-time opportunities for undergraduates with internship experience, corroborating with other later published empirical research by Weiss et al, 2014; Nunley et al, 2016; who emphasize that even average-performing interns were significantly more likely to receive full-time job offers than

non-interns, high-performing interns were more likely to receive higher starting salaries. The study is instrumental in showing the importance of internship in enhancing graduate entrance into the labour. However, it relied on the views of employers alone and hence the need to consider the views of graduates themselves.

Given that spread and recurrent use of technology in modern society, some studies (Feldman and Klaas, 2002; Suvankulov et al, 2012; Bangfu 2014; have shown internet use as job search strategy. One key theme emerges which is how internet use has significantly changed the job application process and improved the channels of communication between employers and job seekers. This is relevant to be reviewed in Zambia given the technological advancement made over time and the current increase use of internet. Bangfu (2014) adds in his quantitative study conducted in Ghana on the use of the internet as a site for job searching. Results in his study showed that majority of the respondents perceived online job search to be effective as compared to alternative job search methods. Although minority of the respondents had personal success with online job search, majority were aware of success with online job search by others. The findings also revealed that “ease of use” and “improved chances of getting a job” were respondents’ biggest motivations for using online job search. Secondly, they point to challenges faced by graduates while undertaking online job search. Some issues raised regarding the challenges of online job search were: concerns about security of personal information, slow feedback or follow up, poor internet access and connection, filling out long application forms amongst others (Bangfu, 2014).

Despite the increased usage of internet in Zambia, there is hardly existing studies on how the internet has influenced the job search and application process. Hence this study seeks to address that afore mentioned gap in knowledge.

Under this section, the key themes underlying strategies that graduates use in job search include; direct applications to employers, search through the employment services, internships before graduation, voluntary work, internet applications, or utilization of more informal search methods as relatives and friends which are referred to as social networks or social capital. However, most of the studies neither focused on uncovering or giving a voice to the participants nor conducted in the Zambian context from the perspective of social work graduates. Thus, the current study will elicit the perspectives of the participants so as to glean a nuanced understanding of the strategies social work graduates use to find employment. Subsequently, focusing on the subjective

perceptions of the graduates can help uncover how their potential advantages and disadvantages of surrounding strategies.

The common theme in all the above studies was that employability is highly influenced by graduates' possession of soft skills and professional skills including university from which university degree was obtained, professional major field, student's performance, internship, and education level. As much as these studies brought out significant findings on factors affecting graduate employability, they were context/profession specific. This is point of departure for the current study in that it will bring out key tenets of graduate employability, attributes and factors influencing graduate employability, job search strategies used in employment search and underlying motives for the selected strategy in Zambia from the perspective of graduates. This justification forms the rationale for this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter looked at the debate in the employability of graduates by looking at various literatures of Zambia and other countries. The current chapter builds on this and covers the philosophical assumptions guiding the study, research design, sampling design, data collection techniques, methods of data management/analysis, and decision choices made by the researcher in order to ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings to be obtained.

The chapter begins with the research paradigm guiding the choice of research design. This is followed by the research design, sampling techniques, sample size, data collection techniques and the data analysis approach adopted by the research. The succeeding section gives an account of the various tests of accuracy that will be conducted in order to ensure the quality of the research. The succeeding sections describe how ethical, confidential and integrity issues will be handled and maintained throughout the research process.

The methodological theory on which this study was based, draws on a range of ideas from interpretivism and phenomenology with a view to according pre-eminence to the knowledge elicited from the participating social work graduates. The philosophical assumptions presented in this methodology chapter are congruent with the theoretical perspectives outlined previously in chapter two. The philosophical and theoretical model that informed this study further helped shape the methods and the interpretation of research findings (Crewell and Poth, 2017; Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Crotty, 1998).

4.2 Interpretive Paradigm

All social scientists approach their subject via explicit or implicit assumptions about the nature of the social world and the way in which it may be investigated (Binti and Urus, 2013). This study adopted the interpretive view of the world, which is subjective and dependent on the perspectives and interpretations of human actors to bring insight into the concept of graduate employability under study.

Interpretivism is a qualitative paradigm that is concerned with understanding the world as it is from subjective experiences of individuals (Reeves and Hedberg, 2003). It makes use of meaning

(versus measurement) oriented methodologies, such as interviewing or participant observation, that rely on a subjective relationship between the researcher and subjects. Myers (2009) argues that the premise of interpretive researchers is that access to reality (whether given or socially constructed) is only through social constructions such as language, consciousness and shared meanings. Interpretive paradigm is underpinned by observation and interpretation, thus, to observe is to collect information about events, while to interpret is to make meaning of that information by drawing inferences or by judging the match between the information and some abstract pattern.

This view emerged as a response to the objectivist paradigm's view of social reality that advocates for single objective reality, use of natural sciences methodologies, and assumed the possibility of objectivity in the social sciences (Hasan, 2016). The interpretive view was chosen over the objectivist view so as to facilitate the researchers understanding of how social work graduates view and understand graduate employability from their individual experience, given that social work graduates socially construct and experience employability differently. Hereafter, it is rested on the belief that realities concerning graduate employability are multiple.

In this study, interpretivism allowed the researcher to focus on the full complexity of how graduate experience and perceive employability and was used to explain the subjective reasons and meanings that lie behind social work graduate employability.

4.3 Research Design

Based on the research paradigm underpinning the current study, this dissertation adopted a qualitative approach set firmly within an interpretive framework, where the thoughts and feelings of the participants are explored, and their individual voices are valued (Bryman, 2012). Correspondingly, the qualitative method had an advantage of providing the researcher with deep insights into the concept of social work graduate employability that would not be possible with quantitative methods (Jackson & Verberg, 2007). The qualitative research method was conducted through a phenomenology research design.

4.3.1 Qualitative Research Strategy Adopted: The Hermeneutic Phenomenology Design

Different methods are available to collect and analyses information in qualitative research (Petty et al., 2012). This research adopted a hermeneutic phenomenology approach, which contends to glean on understanding the views of people experiencing a phenomenon. Hermeneutic

phenomenology fits in well with the Interpretivism in that the research is focused on understanding experiences of social work graduates surrounding the phenomena of employability (Myers, 2009; Petty et al., 2012), and neither their culture nor aimed at theory generation (Biggam, 2008; Jackson & Verberg, 2007).

Scholars such as Langdridge (2007) submit that phenomenology as a qualitative method focuses on human experience as a topic in its own right. The paradigm focuses on meanings and the way in which meanings arises in experience. In particular, a hermeneutic phenomenological research paradigm was chosen over transcendental phenomenology, which is the original form of phenomenological philosophy as conceptualized by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), because it allowed the researcher to be an active participant in the research process. Being a social work graduate, hermeneutic phenomenological was used by the researcher to openly explore graduate employability knowledge through different subjective experiences and insights.

4.4 Target Population

Although graduate employability can be viewed from three different perspectives: employer, student, graduates and Higher learning institution (Tymon, 2013), this study focused on social work graduates from the university of Zambia.

This is because social worker's perspectives are crucial when it comes to giving insight as weather the skills they obtain in class are useful in social work practice (Zambian labour market) and provide insight about the transition of graduates from university into work place (Cai, 2012).

4.4.1 Inclusion Criteria

Social workers are needed as they have the ability to bring insight into the phenomena of graduate employability. The inclusion criteria for graduates depended on:

- Having graduated with a BSW qualification obtained from the University of Zambia.
- Currently employed (NGOs, Public and Private Sector).

4.5 Sample Size

In its initial phase, the study had a proposed sample of 20 participants (social work graduates). However, after the data collection process, the researcher only managed to interview 16 social work graduates. This was mainly due to none willingness of the social workers to participate in

the study during the covid-19 outbreak and the partial lockdown which was in effect at the point of data collection. Regardless, of the challenges, the researcher managed to collect rich and insightful information from the interviewed participants. Unlike quantitative research which often deals with large sample sizes for purposes of generalization (Creswell, 2001), the focus of this research was not to generalize but rather get in depth/rich information (Anderson, 2010).

In addition, it is important to note that, there is no singly acceptable number of participants to be interviewed in qualitative research enterprise; it all depends on the one you think can settle the demand of your research. For instance, Cresswell (2008) suggested between 5 to 25 participants for phenomenology qualitative research while Brannen et al. (2004) commended a sample size of not more than 40 persons. Thus, the proposed sample size is within range of sample size commended by scholars such as Creswell and Brannen and most importantly will meet the demands of the research.

4.6. Sampling Design

According to Zikmund (2003), sampling designs are categorized into probability and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling gives all elements in a population an equal chance of inclusion in the sample while non-probability sampling techniques only considers those participants with the much-needed information or expertise in to be included in the sample. Hence, this study relied on the use of non-probability sampling techniques so as to allow the inclusion of only informed participants on the phenomenon of social work graduate employability. Correspondingly, the researcher employed a combination of respondent driven sampling and maximum variation sampling (purposive) in recruiting the participants.

In phase 1, the researcher first used the gatekeepers (Social Workers Association of Zambia) to identify and purposively select a cadre of social workers who are currently employed in the Zambian labor market and considered essential for the study (Cohen, 2011). The researcher used Maximum variation sampling, which is a purposive sampling technique used to capture a wide range of perspectives relating to employability by ensuring that social workers are selected from different sectors (Public, Private and NGOs) of the Zambian labor market, so as to ensure variation in perspectives on employability.

In phase 2, the researcher used snowball sampling, which involved the use of existing study participants already initially recruited through ‘purposive sampling with maximum variation’ to recruit future participants from among their acquaintances. The participants that the researcher interviewed was asked to link the researcher to other participants (Social workers). Then after interviewing the referred persons, they would be asked whether they also knew other social workers who also meet the study criteria (Etikan et al., 2016). This process continued until no any variation was found in the data (Merriam, 2002). Additionally, the researcher continuously identified themes that were emerging from the interviews as points of inquiries further in subsequent interviews.

4.7 Data Collection Techniques

This study employed semi-structured interviews, which is consistent with the Interpretivism approach adopted. The semi-structured interview sits between the structured and unstructured variants, according the research participants freedom to express their views without diverting from the purpose of the research. Unlike the structured interviews, which limit the views of the participants or the unstructured interviews which risk going out of the topic of discussion, predefined questions of the semi-structured interviews gave a voice to the participants while answering the intended research questions (Myers, 2009).

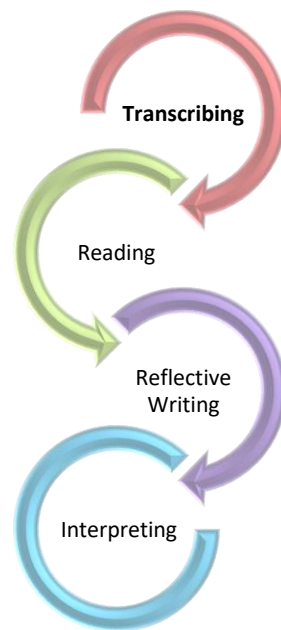
The semi-structured interviews used in this research were guided using an ‘interview guide’. The semi-structured interview guided the collection of relevant information on the employability of social work graduates while allowing research participants to freely share their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, ideas and experiences on the phenomenon of interest. In designing the interview questions, the researcher was guided by the research questions and objectives and one interview guide was developed for social work graduates. The use of an interview guide in data collection helped to direct the conversation towards social work graduate employability as the topic of interest in this study (Hassan, 2011).

4.8. Data Management/Analysis

Data emerging from individual interviews was, tape-recorded and stored in a password-protected laptop with a backup on the google drive. Tape recording interviews granted the interviewer freedom to concentrate during the interview process and ensures everything discussed had been captured.

The data analysis process involved listening to the interview repeatedly, transcribing word for word to ensure accuracy. Then the researcher began to read the transcribed data to identify the codes. Then a thematic coding framework was developed using an iterative analysis process (Bryman, 2012), from which the researcher identified codes/nodes and grouped similar codes/nodes together to come up with categories. NVivo software (version 12 pro) was used to organize the qualitative data and assisted with coding. Inductive analysis was used to derive categories, and the similar categories were grouped together to come up with sub-themes. The process involved reflective writing and interpretation in a rigorous fashion (Laverty, 2003). This is demonstrated in the given figure below.

Figure: 4.9a Hermeneutic Cycle



This kind of thematic structure helped to avoid the problem of forming one mass of oral text during transcription as opposed to forming categories under pre-determined topics (Biggam, 2008). Systematically reviewing and modifying the collected data improved the collection and analysis process.

4.9. Maintaining Rigor

Maintaining the quality of the entire research process and the product is of utmost importance of any given research including of hermeneutic phenomenological research. Thus, this research being a pedagogic practice of textuality were doing research involves considering of the texts that

elucidate the experiences of the research participants, it considered peer review and member checking as means of maintaining rigor.

Peer review is one of strategies that the researcher used to maintain rigor in this study. This was implemented by means of having the research supervisor and other faculty members review the work and provided feedback concerning the accuracy and completeness of my data collection and data analysis procedures (Levin, 2012, Oliver, 2011).

Member checking was another qualitative technique, which was used to establish tenet of credibility in trustworthiness. It was done through sharing of brief summary of the interview scripts and findings with the participants', so they could review that the findings depicted their experiences on the concept of employability. In fact, participant feedback signifies an important quality trail that a hermeneutic phenomenological research has to pass before reaching to its audience since it helps to best represent what the participants intend (Rolfe 2006, Tobin and Begley, 2004).

4.9.1 Positionality and Reflexivity

Bourke (2014) states that positionality is about acknowledging who we are as individuals, and as members of groups, and as resting in and within social positions or in other words it is about power and social relations between the researcher and the participant. In this study, the researcher was an insider/active researcher given that he is a social worker from the University of Zambia and currently employed in the Zambian labor market. Total detachment from the research in this case would be unrealistic and could potentially hinder the research process (Van der Riet, 2012). However, to accomplish positionality, the researcher used the recommendations made by Savin-Baden and Howell (2013) who said that there is need for researchers to acknowledge their personal positions that have the potential to influence the research. In this study, the researcher clearly highlighted his position as a social worker and endeavored to establish a good rapport so as to make the participants feel at ease to fully express their thoughts on graduate employability. Additionally, the data collection method (face-to-face semi-structured interviews) which was used in this study enabled participants to freely voice out their views and not the views of the researcher, which assists in reducing researcher bias (Turner, 2010).

Related to the notion of positionality in field research is the notion of reflexivity of the researcher. Reflexivity entails recognizing that researchers have beliefs, values and norms, which can influence the way data is collected, analyzed and interpreted (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). In this study, the researcher recognized that he is a social worker conducted reflexivity inquiry through means of self-awareness and interrogating of one's own interpretation and endeavored to put aside any preconceived ideas he had or what he may have personally observed about employability of social workers in the Zambian labor market (Greenbanks, 2003).

4.10. Ethical Considerations

The research proposal, informed consent documents, data collection tools and any subsequent modifications were reviewed and approved by the UNZA Research Ethics Committee an institution responsible for oversight of research studies especially seeing as the study involved human subjects (social work graduates).

4.10.1 Ethics in Practice

Prior to commencing the interviews, participants were informed of the research and its purpose both verbally and in the form of a cover letter and informed consent form attached to the Appendix. The cover letter provided information regarding the type of information wanted and how this information was used.

Prior to commencing the interviews, participants were informed of the anonymity of their responses, that the interview sessions were recorded and that their participation in the research was voluntary. A signed informed consent form was obtained from participants that chose to participate in the study. Once consent had been obtained, participants wishing to withdraw from participating in the study were free to do so without losing out on anything.

Concerning the disclosure of information, participants were given the freedom to choose what they permit to be used in the study and what they would want to be withheld from the public, including direct quotes and requests not to be recorded. To ensure privacy for the interviewees, the identity of the individual participants was concealed. Responses were kept in strict confidentiality and personal data such as demographics were kept separate from the rest of the general responses (recorded data information) on a password-protected computer, and backup kept on a password-protected file on google drive.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents findings on the perspectives of the research participants on employability of social work graduates in the Zambian labor Market. The research participants gave accounts of their lived experiences regarding what it took for them to get employed. Similarly, participants recounted stories involving ways of how they transitioned into the labor market and how they navigated the difficulties of building as well as strengthening career paths in social work that allowed them to move from job to job while meeting employer expectations.

Findings are presented under five themes that emerged from the data on social work graduate employability. The first theme relates to the background information of participants with a focus on the occupation of study participants which give a niche of social work practice and labor market in which social work graduates are absorbed in Zambia. The second theme brought into perspective what it took for social work graduates to be employed in the current Zambian labor market. The third theme looked at various job search strategies/methods used by social workers in the quest to get employed in the labor market. The fourth theme beheld into the motives behind the used job search strategies.

Such a presentation helps to give a view of social evidence about phenomenon of graduate employability given that the findings reveal the phenomenology in which conditions, practices and experiences are framed. In accordance with the theoretical perspectives presented in chapters two and three, the findings chapter is grounded in the importance of giving a voice to study participants who were social work graduates from the University of Zambia through their own accounts. This approach is in line with the epistemological standpoint of qualitative researchers and phenomenological methods of understanding the social worlds based on the lived experiences of research participants. The insights from this chapter provide a context for the subsequent chapters.

5.1 Background Information

Background or demographic data in this study gave descriptive information of the participants involved in the study (Lynne, 2013). It included characteristics of participant on; gender, age, marital status, residential area, occupation, and education background presented in tables below.

In this study figures represented under each demographic characteristic had no significant quantitative value but rather used just for descriptive purposes. In fact, demographic information of occupation and education background in this study were necessary for the determination of whether the individuals sampled in the study met inclusive eligibility criteria of the study.

5.1.1 Gender

Gender in its basic sense provides categorical data of participants' sex of males and females in the study. Out of total of 16 participants, most of the participants were male represented by the number of (10) while the minority were female (6) as represent in table 5.1.1 below respectfully.

Table 5.1.1

GENDER	COUNT	PERCENTAGE
MALE	10	62.5
FEMALE	6	37.5
TOTAL	16	100

5.1.2 Age

Table 5.1.2 below shows the age distribution of participants in the study. All the participants were falling in the age range of 24-45years, with most of the participants being 24 and 26 years old, then followed by 28 and 30 years old. While the other ages; 26, 33, 40, and 45 were each respectfully.

Table 5.1.2

AGE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
24	4	25
26	1	6.25
27	4	25
28	2	12.5
30	2	12.5

33	1	6.25
40	1	6.25
45	1	6.25
TOTAL	16	100

5.1.3 Marital Status

Marital status entails the distinct options that describe a person's relationship with a significant other. Married, single, divorced, and widowed were categorizations under marital status. Out of 16 participants, the minority (3) were married while most of the participants (13) were single. None of the participants were divorced or widowed as seen in the table 5.1.3 below respectfully.

Table 5.1.3

MARITAL STATUS	Count	%
Single	3	19
Married	13	81
Total	16	100

5.1.4 Residential Area

Area of residence in this context was taken as the public subdivision of a country (constituency, wards, district, province) in which the individual resides. The geographical location of research is disaggregated at provincial level and research findings show that participants were dispersed within Lusaka, Copperbelt and Eastern province of Zambia with most (14) research participants being residents of Lusaka, followed by both Eastern province at (1) and Copperbelt province at (1) as depicted in table 5.1.4 below respectfully.

Table 5.1.4

Residential Area	Count	%
Lusaka Province	16	88
Eastern province	1	6
Copperbelt Province	1	6
Total	16	100

5.1.5 Education Background

Education background in this study was taken as including only the formal tertiary education and or continuing education such as in-service and post-graduate training participants have attained. On this basis, all the participants in this study had a bachelor's degree in social work and from which (2) were currently pursuing their master's degree, (3) had post graduate diplomas qualifications and the other (3) had already obtained their master's degree in different specializations of social work.

5.1.6 Occupation

All participants in this study were trained professional social workers. However, the focus was in seeing if social workers had taken-up or occupied jobs or any work to make a living. In the same regard, research findings revealed that social workers had taken up employment in the private, public and non-governmental institutions. Under the private sector, social workers worked in profit revenue and growth driven intuitions. For instance, **P'10** said that;

“Currently I’m working with ECOBANK under treasury operations.” <P'10>

<P'9> also said that “I am a management trainee at ZANACO. You see, ZANACO recruits fresh graduates with the purpose of identifying and cultivating local top talent that will continue to add value to the organization and to Zambia.”

Findings also revealed a cadre of social workers working in government departments and or organizations that are owned and operated by the government that exist with a sole purpose of providing services for its citizens. For instance,

P’15 said that *“Am currently working as a social worker and in terms of my actual job title am a Senior Social Welfare Officer at the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services (MCDSS) HQ.”*

When it comes to the public sector, the focus is not about amassing wealth or generating profits but rather serving the public good. In the same regard, **P’14** added that

“I work for government under the department of social welfare under a certain project and am stationed in Kafue. The job is about coordinating and strengthening the systems within the government set up and inclined towards meeting the needs of vulnerable children, adolescents and families.”

Similar to the public sector is a cadre of social workers practicing in voluntary sector also referred to as the civil society organizations or non-governmental organizations (NGOs). NGOs fall in a fraternity of non-profit groups that functions autonomously of any government and aim to serve a social or political goal such as humanitarian causes, advocacy, child safeguarding, needs of vulnerable groups of society or the environment. Like the public sector, NGOs do not seek to generate a profit. Taken for instance,

P’2 said *“I work with an NGO by the name of Childfund Zambia as an M&E person coordinator. [...] My organization in a none-profit organization concerned with the enhancement of the overall wellbeing of children in line with health, nutrition, and education among others.”*

In addition, there are some social workers who despite working for NGOs support government institutions to supplement government efforts at enhancing the wellbeing of people. For instance, **P’6** said

“I am working as a researcher under a project called EQUIP which is aimed at examining the role of ARVs with regards to retention and viral load suppression. So basically, am

stationed or rather work at Kitwe central hospital here on the Copperbelt were I supplement government efforts towards the treatment and prevention of HIV/AIDs.”

Away from the public, private and NGO sector is a cadre of social workers working in ‘institutions of higher learning’. This cadre of social workers work within school systems and provide educational training services to students to prepare them for the labor market. For example, P’1 said

“currently I am a tutor at the University of Zambia where I tutor social work courses to first- and second-year students at the university of Zambia. [.....] After am done with my master’s degree, then I will transition from being a tutor to becoming a full-time lecturer.”

Aside from the primary mandate of lecturing/teaching, social workers also take up additional roles that include research (academic and pragmatic) and administrative duties within a specialist subject area. For instance,

P’3 said “I am a lecturer at the University of Zambia under the department of social work and sociology. I am employed by the department to train social work students for the industry by means of undertaking lectures. I am also required to conduct research, consultancy and publish. Then I equally undertake administrative duties within my specialist subject area.”

Overall, research findings show that the niche of social work in Zambia is quite diverse, with a cadre of social workers practicing or working in the private sector, government/public sector, non-governmental organizations/civil society organizations, quasi-governmental institutions and in Institutions of Higher Learning such as the University of Zambia. After establishing the niche of social work practice in Zambia, the study went on to look what it takes for social work graduates to get a job in Zambia as one of the merging key themes.

5.2 What It Takes For Social Work Graduates To Be Employed In The Zambian Labour Market

The primary goal of most if not all graduates is to be able to get employed and build a career. When it comes to what it takes to be employed in the Zambian labor market, the following subthemes were emerging, academic qualifications, skills, work experience, individual attributes,

religious (prayer), social capital, belong to the social work professional body, and university reputation as deduced from the verbal account of research participants and presented in depth below.

5.2.1. Academic qualifications

Findings of this study revealed that all (16) research participants mentioned the need to have academic qualifications in social work. This basically entails the need for one to have obtained a degree in social work from an institution of higher learning. For instance, research participants made the following remarks;

“It took my academic qualifications and specifically graduating with a distinction in social work for me to get this job.” <P’1>.

However, overriding purpose of this qualification is a contribution to the graduates specialised knowledge of a subject and not necessarily the application thereof. For example, 10 out of 16 participants mentioned that employers were more interested in the specific courses of the social work program is what it took for them to get the job. This was evidenced in the verbal account of <P’3> who mentioned that;

“it had to take my academic qualifications, and more specifically my background in social work research.” <P’3>

Arguably, what counted the most was not only the degree but also knowledge obtained from courses such research, social protection, and child welfare which are offered in the social work program. In addition to this, the minority (4 out of 16) of social work graduates mentioned that doing supplementary courses in M&E, and psychosocial counselling increased one’s chances of getting a job as illustrated in the verbal account of participants as follows;

“well it took my academic qualifications to get this job, as well as the short courses I did.”
<P’4>

Undoubtedly, academic qualifications (Degree) are a necessity to getting employed in the Zambian labour market. Additionally, the courses undertaken during the degree programme matter and other supplementary qualifications such as certificates in short courses give an upper hand in the recruitment process.

5.2.2. The role of Work Experience in getting a Job

Most job advertisements in Zambia require that applicants have relevant work experience in relating to the advertised position. Findings of this study revealed that thirteen (13) out of sixteen (16) research participants stated that one's previous work experience played a key role to getting a job. For example, some participants stated;

"They were looking for someone who had work experience" <P'12>

When asked further what they meant, one participant remarked;

"What really helped me to get that Job [.....] is because the job called for someone who had experience working with children, working with child welfare setting and I had that. It would have been very difficult to get the job if I had no experience because they really needed people with experience with regards to working with children and community mobilization." <P'4>

Work experience is a necessity and asked of social work graduates as it enables them to test out a career and build skills essential to securing a job. For social work graduates, this work experience is gained through internships, work placements and volunteering which are great ways to impress employers.

5.2.3. The role of Skills in getting a Job

Research findings revealed that nine (9) out of sixteen (16) participants revealed that for one to get a job, it had to take them having some sort of expertise needed in order to do a job or task. These job skills could be developed during the course of undergraduate or postgraduate studies as well as through work experience and allow social workers to do their job well. This is illustrated in the following remarks;

"To get a job, you need to have expertise that you bring to the table. I must say for social workers, we do not have universal skills that everyone must have but instead its about having skills relevant to your current field of work. For example, Advocacy skills, Interviewing, Community mobilization, Planning skills, Case management (assessment/referrals/linkages) and Resource mobilizations skills are vital for me because I work in the NGO." <P'3>

“I got this job on the basis of my skills and expertise. For example, my job requires me to have counselling skills, good communication skills, leadership skills, and listening skills because I provide direct services to individuals as a counselor and you have to listen to what they are talking about and understand”. <P’12>

Participants mentioned various skills that were vital in increasing one’s chances of getting a job. For example, good communication skills was an essential tool in achieving productivity and are always valuable assets to an organization as illustrated in the verbal account of; <P’ 12> who said;

“You need to have good communication skills, leadership skills, and listening skills because you have to listen to what they are talking about and understand”.

Additionally, skills in community mobilization were mentioned as vital for social work graduates and calls for social work graduates to have an ability to help communities form organizations, an ability to identify capacity-building needs among communities (e.g. leadership skills, networking and partnership-building skills as evidenced in the verbal account of <P’ 8> who mentioned that;

“One of the skills social work graduates is the community mobilization skills because we work with communities and groups in society. One should be able to talk to people and organise them at that level.” <P’ 8>

Likewise, research skills emerged as being vital and a recognition that all social workers are researchers and needed to have research skills which form an integral part in problem solving as illustrated in the verbal account of <P’ 6> who mentioned that,

“graduates need to have research skills and good report writing skills because they are applicable everywhere you practice.”

Similarly, CV writing was an important skill which social work graduates need to possess. Most employers in Zambia seek to look at an applicant’s CV before even requesting for supporting documents. Hence, social work graduates should be able to package and sell themselves in their CV;

“Social workers need to sell themselves in their CV, it matters how you market yourself.”
<P’ 3>

This is further supported by a need for job search skills which form an integral part in getting a job. One can have the necessary qualifications and work experience and yet fail to find a job if they do not have the skills in job search. There is was established in the research findings of this study that social work graduates needed to have the ability and the capacity to strategically look for employment and sell themselves to potential employers.

“We should be strategic on how we present ourselves on the labour market. Social work is broad we work with families and communities and we work almost everywhere so we can volunteer everywhere in banks, clinics and hospitals”. <P’ 12>

Furthermore, the role of individual attributes in social work graduate employability was emphasised in the findings of this study and at least twelve (12) out of sixteen (16) participants attested to individual unique characteristics of; adaptability, work ethics, confidence, consistency and persistence, dependability, creativity and innovation, sacrifice and commitment (voluntereesim), Public and leadership attributes ascribed to someone as key determinants in getting employed. Based on the verbal accounts of research participants, Social workers need to possess some of the identified individual attributes and made the following remarks;

“As social workers, we need to have certain qualities that are unique to oneself and yet valuable to employers. So when I doing my attachments I believe that I demonstrated that I was dependable as a professional. Graduates need to be able to demonstrate that they are dependable and can be trusted with work by employers.” <P’16>

When I was called for Interviews, I passed those interviews [.....] I think as a social worker you need to have adaptability qualities because as social workers we work in different fields and get posted in different areas, it could be a bank, an NGO, among others and a social work should be able to adapt according to new environment.” <P’13>

It is vital to note that there are no universally agreed upon framework skills and competencies for social worker in the Zambian labor market, and the skills required to enter the labor market differ for each job advertised and social workers need to have the generic skills necessary for a given job.

5.2.4. The role of Religion (prayer) in Social Work Graduate Employability

When applying for jobs, graduates often consider many other things like the cover letter, creating the perfect resume, making sure you have great references and highlighting the parts of life that apply best for the position. However, research findings from this study revealed that the minority of participants two (2) out of sixteen (16) mentioned turning to God for help in the job-hunting process. P'10> mentioned that, after two years of job hunting, he finally got a breakthrough through prayers and made the following remarks;

“[.....] I know you do not expect me to say this but for me it took prayers to get this job. You just don't know how much I prayed for me to have this breakthrough. All I can say is that immediately I took it all to God through prayer, everything started working out for me.”

Equally, P'16> said

“It only took 1 month for me to get my first job, and I rest assured that it was only God's hand at work[.].”

Zambia is a Christian nation and the Christian values as well as beliefs that Zambians hold tend to influence how people lead their lives including decision making. As regards, whenever faced with obstacles of life such as hardships that come with job search, graduates ask for divine intervention from God. Prayer for employment is also a great way of releasing all stress and anxiety related to searching for a job, by entrusting God with your job-hunting process.

5.2.5. The role of Social capital in Social Work Graduate Employability

For one to find employment, social workers need to create and have social capital or social networks which are a product of human interaction. People use relatives, friends, and individuals in their cycle to get jobs. The positive outcome may be tangible or intangible and may include useful information, innovative ideas, and future opportunities that help them find jobs and transition into the labor market. Findings in this study reveal that ten (10) out of sixteen (16) participants attested to using social networks such as friends and family/relatives as a means to getting a job and had this to say;

P'12 > *“to get a job in Zambia, you need to know someone with information or better yet in the employing organization. I have gotten jobs mainly through friends”.*

“Used friends also, by means of them providing me with information on certain job openings from which I had to apply own my own. Even the scholarship I got to get my masters was through information from a friend.” <**P'3**>

In today's world, social networks cannot be overlooked as a means to getting employed but rather needs to be harnessed and strengthened given that people live in a global world.

5.2.6. The Role of Professional Body (SWAZ) in Social Work Graduate Employability

Research findings from this study showed that there were certain jobs that required one to be a member of the Social Workers Association of Zambia (SWAZ) in order for them to be considered for a job. In the same regard three (3) out of (16) participants mentioned getting jobs on the basis of being members of the professional body as evidenced in the following verbal account;

“I was shocked to see an advertised from SOS were they clearly stipulated they wanted a social worker who was a member of SWAZ. At that time, I was one of the very few applicants who was a member of SWAZ. I was shortlisted and got the job on that basis.”
<**P'6**>

Furthermore <**P'4**> added that;

“In early 2018, SWAZ under the UNICEF funded SEEVCA project was looking for social workers to be seconded to the department of social welfare in the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services (MCDSS) with the purpose of strengthening the social workforce and rolling out a community level case management model. The job advertisement clearly stated that they wanted trained social workers who were members of SWAZ, and at that time I had been a member in good standing of the Association. I had been volunteering my services and helping to organise World Social Work Day celebrations. I got the job amongst 20 other applicants who were also members of SWAZ.”
<**P'4**>

There are a few organisations (SOS-Zambia, Childfund and World-Vision) that recognise and value the importance of employing professionally trained social workers to occupy social work

positions. Correspondingly, they emphasise and put it as a requirement that all applicants of the social work positions be affiliated to the professional body of social work (SWAZ).

5.2.7. The Role of University Reputation in Social Work Graduate Employability

Currently, there are a lot of institutions producing social workers but the standards which the institution has and the name it has built influences the extent to which students are absorbed in the labour market. Research findings four (4) out of sixteen (16) participants, show that reputation of the institution gives higher chance of being employed and illustrated in the following verbal accounts of research participants;

“The reputation of the institution you went to, the willingness to learn and accept feedback that separates you from the rest of other job applicants. Being a graduate from the university of Zambia somehow makes you stand out and I result, my organisation prefers employing people from UNZA.” <P’9>

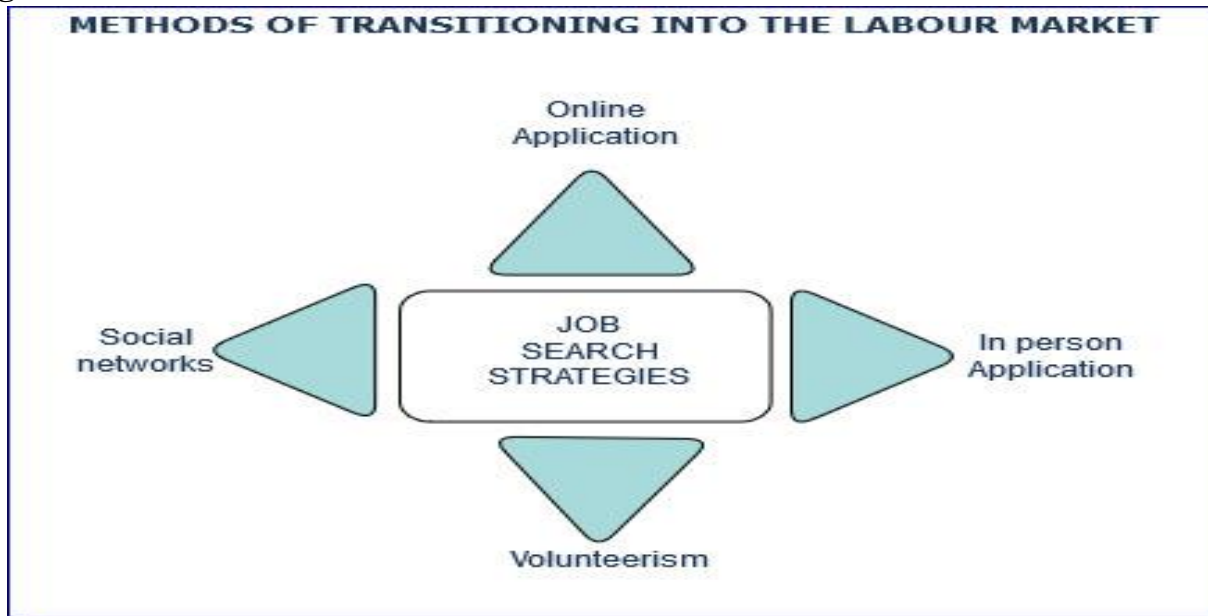
“Looking at my current job they wanted a student from UNZA, MULUNGUSHI or RUSANGU Universities so these other students were put down because of that. I know it may not be the same for all programmes at UNZA, but when it comes to social work graduates, we are given more preference than from other universities and this is helped in me securing this job.” <P’14>

The University of Zambia is ranked highest institution of learning with reputable standards and a lot of its alumni holding big positions in different organization and wings of government. The works and influence of these people also tend to have a positive effect and increases the chances of new graduates being employed.

5.3 JOB SEARCH STRATEGIES

Emerging from the research findings was the theme of job search strategies or ways that social workers use to get jobs in the Zambian labor market. Within this, a number of subthemes in job search strategies were stated by participants as including; In-person application, online applications, social networks, and volunteering as presented/summarized in figure 5.3a and presented in the succeeding subthemes below.

Figure 5.3



Source: (Research Findings of this study, 2020)

With increased technology advancement, job aspirants are taking advantage of surfing and applying for jobs online through emails, company websites/portals, and online job advertisement sites i.e. ‘goZambia jobs’ company websites, and LinkedIn among others. From the verbal accounts of the participants, online job applications came out to be a more popular job search strategy used as fourteen (14) out of sixteen (16) participants mentioned searching and applying for jobs online. In the same regard, participants had this to say;

<P’1> “I was searching and applying online mostly, like for example when an agency advertises for the positions and there are prescription on what they need, and they attach the e-mail where you attach your documents if you are interested and forward them online without going physically”

Correspondingly, **P’12> said,** *“I used the internet a lot. Whenever, I see an advert online be it on a company website or social media, I would apply just there and then and Mainly it was e-mail or company application portal.”*

There were many reasons that the participants gave for this preference. Some participants stated that online application strategy was convenient, efficient and effective in that it allowed them to

make numerous applications to different organizations while costing the least. For example, one participant remarked;

“Then I would also apply online and most of my applications were actually done online through company portals and emails provided in the Job advertisement. It was the most convenient for me to use because I could apply from the comfort of my home without spending so much money on transport but rather just buy internet.” < P’10>

As much as online search engines were popular mode of job search, some participants such as <P’3> held different views on the significance of online job search engines. For example,

“I used online applications through emails mostly. Although by then internet access was a problem.” <P’3>

Similarly, P’7> narrated on the;

“none-access to internet, higher cost of purchasing of bundles, employer none-response and none-acknowledgement of receipt of the application.” This yields a lot of anxiety on the part of the applicants not knowing whether the application was successful.

Research findings also revealed that 11 out of 16 participants attested to using ‘*in person job application*’ which involves physically dropping application letters to potential recruiting organizations and employers. For example, some participants had this to say;

P’5> “just used to apply through physical applications whereby I take the letters to the agency. This called for me to physically hand deliver applications to the organization and that the same way I actually applied at University of Zambia.”

In tandem with the view of P’5 was that of P’8 who said, *“I was making physical applications, I was not just following adverts. I was dropping letters I was not focusing on one organization. Others would refuse that we have not advertised but I would manage to drop.”*

Despite the higher use of ‘*in person application*’ as a job search strategy, participants brought out some challenges citing high costs, rejections, long hours moving to employing agencies and long waiting hours before they could be let into an organization. For example,

P'3> had this to say, *“Although I must mention that physical applications are very costly, and I used to spend a lot of money moving from organization to organization.”*

Equally, **P'8** mentioned that, *“At times I could be rejected and refused to enter organizational premises, and in other instances I could be made to wait for longer hours before I could be allowed or let in.”*

P'6 added that, *“[...] it is a bit tedious, were you are apply and you are not given feedback just there then.”*

Under the strategy of ‘*in-person application*’, another subtheme of ‘*Postal address application*’ emerged for those participants who were required to make in-person applications but could not manage due to being found in a different town or far away location from a recruiting agency.

In as much as technology has presented a medium through job applicants use to apply for jobs, there are still a lot of organization both private and public that request prospective employees to physically drop hard-copy application letters to potential employers. As required, applicants then have no choice but to find ways of ensuring the hard-copy applications letters reach employing institutions and one way is through the post office. Likewise, two (2) of the participants out of sixteen (16) mentioned searching or applying for jobs through the post office and had this to say;

P' 7> *“I had to use the post office to apply for jobs. I saw the job advert in the newspaper then I did the hard copies and went to post it at the post.”*

Similarly, **P'8** said, *“I used the post office to apply or rather respond to job adverts that were outside Lusaka, and I would post letters frequently.”*

Besides physically going to different organizations to look for employment, social work graduates attested to use of their social networks to search for employment. Social networks are a product of human interaction. For example, social work graduates confirmed to using friends, and individuals in their cycle to search and get jobs as research findings of this study revealed that ten (10) out of sixteen (16) participants used social networks such as friends and family/relatives as a means to getting a job. This is remarked in the verbal account of **P'12>** as;

“I get jobs and have gotten jobs mainly through friends. This strategy has an advantage in that, friends will never ask you to bribe them for you to get a job like what is happening somewhere you have to pay for you to get a job”.

P’16 also emphasized that *“The most mode or strategy I have used to get jobs has been through my networks of people I know. I always position myself where I am visible to others and create networks with other people and partners.”*

The positive outcome of using social networks may be tangible or intangible and include useful information, innovative ideas, and future opportunities that help graduates to find jobs and transition into the labor market. There is also a cadre of social worker who did not use the network of friends and family but rather relied on other forms of social network such as a linkage from former employers, and university professors. For example,

P’4 said, *“To get my current job, I was recommended by my former university lecturer.”*

Similar to the view of **P’4** is also that of **P’3** who mentioned that *“I got my current job through my academic supervisor, you need to have the right connections.”*

Additionally, other social workers mentioned using an objective network or rather formal network of former employers who based on the professional relationship and proven good work ethic linked them to other jobs. For example, **P’5 and P’15 had this to say;**

P’5 > *“just like my first, second and third job, I was luckily linked to the previously UN job by my former boss.”*

Similarly, **P’15** > said, *“when I was doing my Block fieldwork 2, I had a supervisor who at the time when I started looking for employment was a director for community development and his the one that linked me to the job.”*

Given the current job freeze in government and scarcity of job opportunities in the Zambian labor market, research participants belabored to volunteer as a means to getting a job and gain experience. Volunteering entails social workers taking up unpaid work where someone gives their time to help a not-for-profit organization, profit or public organizations.

Ultimately, when it comes to job search strategies for searching for jobs, applicants used whatever strategy possible to get into the labor market and had to use whatever resources at their disposal. For instance, P'10> said,

“I signed up for go Zambia Jobs, Job hunters and my friends and I could alert ourselves on job openings. So this helped to know about several Job openings. I would look at what relates to me and apply.”

Equally, P'7> made mention that,

“You have to be on the lookout, I remember we used to buy newspapers every day and ask people around. And for me I think am social, and when am given an opportunity to do something, I do it to my best of ability so that someone should remember that there was this girl who did this. So, I would go to people's office and ask if there is something I can do, even on voluntary basis I can do, so, that helped me. So, there used to be things like short projects for one week were they just call you come there is this. So, for me because I was making myself available it was kind of easy.”

Due to the nature of the job search and recruitment process in the current Zambian labor market, there is and will always be competition for any vacancy and hence social workers use individual strategies and sometimes a combination of two, three or all four discussed job search strategies.

5.4: MOTIVES FOR THE PREFERRED JOB SEARCH STRATEGIES

Job applicants need to figure out a way to psych themselves up as they apply for jobs daily and have existing motives behind their preferred job search strategies. This section highlights the accounts of the participants on their motives, experiences and perceptions of job search engines. In the words of P'8>, *“the job search strategies we use to apply for jobs is in most cases determined by what the potential employer prescribes. For example, if they demand you apply through email or hard copy letters, you have no choice but to rather comply with what has been prescribed.”*

One thing was clear, job seekers use prescribed job search/application procedures by potential employers. Even so, job seekers tend to have their own motives for the preferred strategy as

presented in the succeeding subthemes starting with online applications, in-person application, social networks, and lastly volunteerism.

Based on the verbal account of research participants, the findings revealed that social workers opted to search for jobs online because it gave them a wide platform through which jobs can be searched and applied for conveniently. As regards, **P'9>** said,

“Online searching and application is convenient for me. Also, it allows me to type my application letters clearly and I personally feel like physical handing of letters should not be happening now but quiet unfortunately, it is still happening especially with government applications and I don't see the benefits out of that.”

Other participants such as **P'1>** and **P'10>** brought out issues of cost-efficiency, convenience and comfort that comes with using online application and had this to say,

P'1> said, *“the online search and application is very convenient because the process is cheaper, and you don't have to walk a long distance and drop letters and it is less time consuming.”*

While **P'10>** said, *“It was the most convenient for me to use because I could apply from the comfort of my home without spending so much money on transport but rather just buy internet”*

When it comes to social networks, the motives were stated as being embedded in the provision of first-hand information about job openings, upper hand and being favoured in the selection process. For instance, **P'1>** had this to say;

“social network strategy was used because not every time that you will know that there is a job but friends will help to inform you and know how many job opportunities are out there”

P'15> mentioned that,

“I prefer social networks because someone in the inner cycle know you which makes it easier to get a job. Depending on how strong your social network is, it becomes almost

automatic to get the job. For example, if your link is the HR, you automatically get hired as was the case for me. This is why I opt for and rely on social networks.”

Other participants such as P’16, actually regard social networks as being the best job search strategy and justified it as;

P’16> *“Social networks are the best because once linked to a job, its guaranteed that you will get that job. In fact, they work better when people who are connecting you know what you are capable of.”*

In the same regarded, **P’12>** opted for social networks in the sense that they give you an upper hand in the application process especially if the people you know have been in the system long enough.

Research findings also revealed that the motive for the use of in-person application was attributed to the chance it gives to applicants to showcase there writing skills. It also presented an opportunity for applicants to meet potential employers and assures the applicant that the prospective employer has received the application and potentially archived it. This is what participant **P’5>** had to say;

“The motive for applying physically, to me I think it gives the applicant the opportunity to practice writing, to practice formal writing and it shows the potential employer that this guy actually knows what he is doing.[....], the motive is that if something is in your hand there is a higher chance, it is more like a game of chance the way employment work now. To me I saw it fit that maybe if I took there is a high chance that maybe someday the human resource would pull it out of the archives and take some interest to read it.”

Furthermore, **P’5>** buttressed his point by recognising that Zambia is not yet ready to fully transition to online job search/application and had this to say;

“unfortunately not everyone even today in Zambia is able to use a laptop, sadly in Zambia I don’t think we’ve reached a point where we can say majority or large of population is computer literate. So for jobs that require you to apply online, some people are disadvantaged. It also comes back to cost as for me required me to have constant internet because the internet connection could cost money of course and you have to be online to the applications.”

Research findings also showed that 6 out of 16 participants were in favour of taking up voluntary work as a means to getting a job. Based on the verbal accounts of the research participants, the underlying motives were attributed to the fact that volunteerism helped social workers to gain the much-needed work experience that employers ask for. For example, P'7> said,

“Most of the adverts I see in Zambia they ask for work experience starting from two years extending to five years and more. And this as a graduate and who has not worked before, how would I get that experience. So, for me it was my benefit to get that voluntary work. When I went to the office, I was even told this is Zambia you don't expect anything when you are doing voluntary work and all the cost was on my parents, so, I was working, and I was going every day. Working like I was being paid at the end of the month, but I was working for my personal experience and I really learnt a lot. So, maybe if other social workers can try and do that because it really worked well for me.”

This is in tandem with P'8> who said,

“During the course of pursuing my bachelor's degree in social work, I had an opportunity to gain some work experience through my block-field work 1 and 2 before graduating. However, most organisation nowadays want people with more work experience unlike the 6 months internship I had. So, I decided to start taking up voluntary work as a means to gaining relevant work experience.”

Research findings also reveal that, job applicants opt to volunteer owing to the fact that volunteerism exposes social workers to potential employers, puts them in the inner circle and make them first options in case of any openings in employing institutions. Overall, it can be deduced that, there are different motives behind the use of the above job search strategies.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

6.0 Introduction

The focus of the previous chapter was on presenting findings for this study, while the current chapter presents the discussion of the findings of the study in tandem with the research objectives which were;

- i) To understand the lived experiences of social work graduates regarding what it takes to be employed
- ii) To find out from the point of view of social work graduates the strategies they use to get a job
- iii) To understand the motives for the selected job, search strategies.

In the discussion process, findings from the study will be looked at comparatively with findings in literature while drawing on implications of the findings in the study, after which a conclusion is made and possible recommendations.

6.1 Lived Experiences of Social Work Graduates Regarding what it takes to be Employed

Over the last two decades there has been an increasing emphasis on work preparedness and contribution of the graduate workforce to the economy (Rae, 2007). In fact, Paterson, (2017) submits that work readiness (employability) is best understood as being subjective and individual, fortified by concepts of identity and practices. Owing to this assertion, findings generated in this study indicate that for social workers to be employable, it takes one possessing (i) academic qualifications, (ii) work experience, (iii) skills, (iv) individual attributes, (v) be religious (prayerful), (vi) social networks, (vii) belong to the social work professional body, and (viii) graduating from a reputable university as deduced from the verbal account of research participants.

6.1.1. Academic qualifications as a key tenet of social work graduate employability

According to the International Federation of Social Work (IFSW), (2014) Social work is regarded as a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Unswerving from the definition of social work, one cannot be considered as a social worker if they have not been to school and trained as social workers in a reputable institution of higher learning. Tymon (2013)

adds that higher education is not a guarantee to a high-paying job, but it enhances employability. Consistent to this view, the findings of the current study revealed that all 16 participants mentioned the need to have academic qualifications in social work as key factor to getting a job. This entails the need for one to have a diploma, degree or higher qualifications in social work from an accredited institution. This was illustrated in the following remarks; *“It took my academic qualifications (Bachelors of social work) for me to get this job. [.....] and specifically graduating with a distinction in social work for me was an added advantage. You see, getting employed in academia at the University of Zambia is highly competitive and you need to have a distinction.”* <P’1>.

Likewise, Dacre Pool & Qualter, (2013), indicate that for graduates to be employable, they must have academic achievements and personal success. Correspondingly, research findings in this study also showed that, for some social workers what it took for them to get the job was not only the degree but also the content of programmes and personal success achieved by undertaking short courses in addition as evidenced in the verbal account of participants as follows; *“well it took my academic qualifications to get this job, as well as the short courses I did. I did some short courses in child protection and I also did a course Social work practice with Children and families, which I felt made suitable for the position.”*

Arguably, what matters the most is not just possessing the degree or diploma in social work but also the actual content of degree programme such as having undertaken a research course, M&E, Social Protection, psychosocial counselling among others. The finding of this study are consistent with Baverstock and Steinitz, (2014a and b) who postulates that even if you already meet the minimum educational requirements for a job you want, exceeding requirements particularly with focus area or advanced studies in a subject area related to your field can make you a more attractive job candidate, increasing your likelihood of getting a job. Undoubtedly, academic qualifications (Degree) are a necessity to transitioning into the labour market. This corresponds well with the human capital theory which contends formal education is seen as an investment in human capital, and results in longer-term labour market gains (Almendare, 2011).

6.1.2. Work experience as a key tenet of social work graduate employability

All social work graduates in Zambia are required to have previous work experience to get employed. This was supported by findings from this study from which 13 out of 16 participants,

mentioned that to get a job as a social worker, you need to have previous work experience which enables you to test out a career and build skills essential to securing a job. This is in tandem with literature from the Graduate Market in 2017, a recent survey by Highfliers which clearly illustrated the importance employers place on work experience. From one hundred of the UK's best known and most successful employers, over a third warned that graduates who have had no previous work experience at all, have little or no chance of receiving a job offer for their graduate programmes (Highfliers, 2018). The importance of work experience in getting a job for social workers cannot be over-emphasised.

For social workers, work experience is obtained through block *field work placement I and II* which is compulsory for all social work students to gain experience in both the rural and urban setups. Other social workers gain further work experience through internships and voluntary work that are great ways to gain the much-needed work experience and getting exposed to potential future employers. The emphasis on social work graduates to have work experience is that it already exposes them to the work environment and allows them to gain some hands-on skills and knowledge on how to do the job exceptionally.

Employers increasingly expect job applicants to have relevant experience as well as good qualifications. This indicates that social workers need to take any opportunity they can to start to build up a portfolio of work experience. This can be done for example, through take up voluntary work that involves spending as little as one day or two days in a week with an employer, doing simple tasks or merely work shadowing (watching an experienced employee at work) can be hugely beneficial for social work graduates seeking to transition into the labour market.

6.1.3. Employability Skills as a key tenet of social work graduate employability

While education and experience make social work graduates eligible to apply for a job, to be successful in most roles, social workers need skills. Research findings of this study revealed that all 16 participants in the study emphasised the need for one having some sort of skills (expertise) needed in order to do a job or task. These job skills could be developed during the course of undergraduate or postgraduate studies as well as through work experience and allow social workers to do their job well. This was consistent to many scholars such Crossman and Clarke, 2010; Andrews and Higson, 2008; Abdullah-Al-Mamun, 2012; and Christou and Eaton, 2000; argue that skills are of great significance in the search and gaining employment.

On the verbal accounts of participants, it was identified that social workers needed to have skills in; communication, community mobilization, research, report writing, CV writing, Job search, job interview, resource mobilization, and advocacy skills (Interviews with the participants: December 2019). These skills can be categorised into ‘*hard-skills*’ and ‘*soft-skills*’ with the former being related to specific technical knowledge and training (for example in resource mobilisation, advocacy, counselling skills, research skills, report writing, community mobilisation) while the latter being personality traits such as leadership, communication or time management. In highlighting what soft skills are Lafer (2004) argues that soft skills are individual attributes such as discipline, loyalty and punctuality which are not skills that one either possesses or lacks; they are measures of commitment that one chooses to give or withhold based on the conditions of work offered. Regardless, soft skills are an important part of any job, and tend to influence graduate employability (Barski, 2012).

Both types of skills are necessary to successfully perform and advance in most jobs. However, as a general rule, employers are willing to teach someone the job-specific skills required, such as how to source for funding, institutional specific reporting system, monitoring and evaluation systems, operate particular pieces of machinery, or use particular computer packages that are very specific to that role or company. However, they usually want to see that you already have the other ‘soft skills’ before hiring, because they are much harder to teach.

Despite acknowledging the importance of having skills for graduates, literature does not point to specific social work skills that are needed. This was a point of departure for the current study which brought some specific skills needed by social work graduates. Important to note however, is a lack of a well-established competency framework to guide skills development of social work graduates in Zambia.

6.1.4. Religion as a key tenet of social work graduate employability

The role of religion in broader society is definitely a dynamic one. The relationship between both religion and society is always changing. Religion affects different aspects of societies in different ways and different forms, causing the forms of society to change according to a change in religion (Rezapour, Hosseini, and Takalu, 2016). In this study, research findings show that 2 out of 16 participants resorted to prayers in the job-hunting process and emphasized the huge role that God plays in opening up job opportunities for the job seekers. This is evidenced in the verbal account

of <P'10> who mentioned that, after two years of job hunting, he finally got a breakthrough through prayers and made the following remarks;

“Currently, somebody's chances of getting employed in Zambia is 50/50 [.....]. I had been applying for jobs for over a year and nothing fruitful was coming out of it. I know you do not expect me to say this but for me it took prayers helped me to get this job and you just don't know how much I prayed for me to have this breakthrough. All I can say is that immediately I took it all to God through prayer, everything started working out for me.”

Equally, P'16> said *“It only took 1 months for me to get my first job, and I rest assure that it was only God's hand at work. This is because I was called to work by an organisation I had an opportunity during my 3rd year to volunteer to but the strangest thing is that I did not have a phone but they still found me through friends. I mean they could have easily replaced me with someone else, but because of God, they still found me. I know not many people that you are going to talk to will be bold enough to bring out the aspect of prayers in the Job search but the truth still remains that we all pray when looking for jobs just the same way we used to pray when writing exams.”*

Zambia is a Christian nation and the Christian values as well as beliefs that Zambians hold tend to influence how people lead their lives including decision making. As regards, whenever faced with obstacles of life such as hardships that come with job search, graduates ask for divine intervention from God. Nonetheless, there is scanty literature on the role of religion as in the job search process as some previous studies have in the past focused on how the integration of religion and spirituality in the workplace help people to be more satisfied with their job (Rezapour, Hosseini, and Takalu, 2016). Arguably, the role of religion in the graduate job search process entails new knowledge that needs to be explored further and strengthen.

6.1.5. Social Networks as a key tenet of social work graduate employability

Social networks of friends, family, former employees, and university professors emerged as key tenets in the employability of social work graduates in this study. In fact, 10 out of 16 participants attested to using social networks such as friends, family/relatives, former employers, university professors and co-workers as a means to getting a job. This corresponds and fits in well with Trimble & Julie, (2011) who suggested that, drawing on network ties from friends, family

members, acquaintances, employers, or coworkers, graduates can improve the job search because individuals gain access to and make use of their network's social capital.

A better understanding of networking can be obtained by framing it with respect to two classifications of job search; *nepotism social works* and *merit-based social networks*. Nepotism based social networks provide a means to transitioning into the labor market on account of friendship and relatives/family ties or relations. This type of network tends to have personal inclinations. For example, by virtue of being a friend or a relative, one gets a job as illustrated in the verbal account of P'12> who had this to say; *"to get a job in Zambia, you need to know someone with information or better yet in the employing organization. I have gotten jobs mainly through friends."*

On the other hand, is merit based social network involving contacts of former university professors, workmates, and employers, who are aware of the applicant's competencies and capabilities and based on merit link job seekers to potential employers. In this context, job seekers are linked to jobs on the basis of their proven abilities, capabilities and work as well as education credentials. This is highlighted by Coonfield (2012) who conducted a study on job search patterns of college graduates whose findings revealed that the utility of educational credentials depends largely on social capital, suggesting that social capital facilitates the job search. A graduate may have good educational credentials but struggle to get a job/noticed by potential employers not until someone who knows them or has worked with them put them in the spotlight or puts in a good recommendation either formally or informally to potential employers.

While this job searching strategy can result in a successful job search for some, not all job seekers benefit from reliance on social networks. Hence of the two (nepotism and merit-based), emphasis should be on facilitating conditions that help social work graduates to become exposed to potential employers and create social networks that will help them transition into the labor market. This solely because, not all graduates have friends or relatives who are well suited to facilitate their transition into the labor market.

6.1.6. Belonging to a Professional Body (SWAZ) as a key tenet of social work graduate employability.

Social Workers Association of Zambia (SWAZ) is a professional body of social workers that aspires to promote best practices for social work training and practice in Zambia. One of its key mandates is to uphold ethical standards and promote the interests of all social work professionals (SWAZ, 2006). Research findings show of this study revealed that there are certain jobs that require one to be a member of social workers association of Zambia (SWAZ) in order for them to be considered for a job. In the same regard 3 out of 16 participants mentioned getting jobs on the basis of being members of the professional body. For example, organisations such as SOS-Zambia, Childfund and World-Vision are among a few institutions were cited as recognising the importance of employing professionally trained social workers to occupy social work positions (Interview with the participant: December 2019). Correspondingly, they emphasis and put it as a requirement that all applicants of the social work positions be affiliated to the professional body of social work (SWAZ).

In an ideal sense, all social work jobs and social work practice institutions must be regulated and protected by the professional body of social workers. However, the social work profession in Zambia is currently not regulated by any piece of legislation. This has negatively impacted the quality of social work practice as practitioners are not made accountable to the code of ethics, additionally affecting the employability of social workers in Zambia (Interview with the participant: December 2019). Without a strong/viable professional body of social work and the social work legislation, social workers have left everything to chance and hence have made it possible for any person to practice social work at the expense of the well-being of vulnerable Zambians, and as such leaving them open to different types of vices.

6.1.7. Reputation of University

Currently, there are a lot of institutions producing social workers in Zambia such as Mulungushi, Canvendish, DMI- St Eugen, and the University of Zambia (UNZA) to make mention of a few. With all these universities producing social work graduates, the standards which the institution has and the name it has built influence the extent to which students are absorbed in the labour market. Research findings from this study revealed that reputation of the institution gives higher chance of being employed. This is in line with Paterson, (2017) who argued that external dimension of

employability such as university reputation, gives higher chance of getting employed or finding a job. The logic behind this argument lies in the fact that expansion of higher education (HE) participation in many countries in recent decades has led to increasing interest by researchers and policy-makers in the ‘education-to-work’ transition of new graduates and it is believed that good reputable universities produce graduates who are readily ‘employable’.

In the same regard, the University of Zambia is considered as the highest institution of learning with reputable standards and a lot of its alumni holding big positions in different organisation and wings of government. The works and influence of these people also tend to have a positive effect and increases the chances of new graduates being employed.

Despite, identifying the ‘eight key discussed tenets’ of what it takes for social workers to transition into the Zambian labor market, social workers expressed emotional sentiments based on their lived experiences outside of their control that negatively affects the labor market transition process and the succeeding theme endeavors to discuss.

6.1.8 Emotional sentiments on External factors affecting graduate employability

When it comes to the process of transitioning in the labor market, findings showed that all research participants (16) expressed negative sentiments concerning how hard it is for social work graduates to get employed in the Zambian labor market. These were targeted at employers, the University of Zambia and the Professional body of social workers (SWAZ). Based on the verbal accounts of social workers, the profession of social work is poorly recognised in Zambia and most employing institutions do not fully know and understand what social work is as a profession or what social workers can do as they are regarded as mere social scientist.

In as much as social workers are employable and possess what it takes to transition into the labor market, it is clear that they are currently struggling to get employed in the Zambian labor market and hence the emphasis from research participants for social workers to be flexible, diverse and strategic as they look for jobs. In the same regard, P’12> had this to say; *“We should be strategic in how we search for jobs and on how we present ourselves on the labor market. Social work is broad we work with families and communities and we work almost everywhere so we can volunteer everywhere in banks, clinics and hospitals”*.

This lays a basis for the succeeding chapter which looks into the strategies social workers employ as they transition into the Zambian labor market.

6.2 Strategies Social Work Graduates Use to Enter the Labor

Labor-market entrants are able to choose within a wide range of job search methods. They may send direct applications to employers, search through online job websites and make online applications, make in-personal applications, volunteering/interning, or utilize more informal search methods as relatives and friends.

Of interest was the use of internet to search and apply for jobs online. Research findings from this study showed that, with increased technology advancement, job aspirants mentioned taking advantage of applying for jobs online through emails, company websites/portals, and online job advertisement sites i.e. 'goZambia jobs' LinkIn, among others. In fact, online job applications came out to be a more popular job search strategy used, as 14 out of 16 participants mentioned applying for jobs online. This corresponded to findings from studies by Feldman and Klaas, 2002; Suvankulov et al, 2012; Bangfu 2014; that have shown internet use as the most used job search strategy.

It can be deduced that the coming of technological advancement and increased use of the internet has significantly changed the job application process and improved the channels of communication between employers and job seekers. The internet is providing a wide platform through which job seekers can search and view various job advertisement. For example, there has been an increased usage of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and twitter among others where companies have created organization pages where job seekers can easily learn about the organization and see job openings. Not only are they able to search for jobs through the internet, social work graduates are also able to apply for jobs in the comfort of their homes via emails and company application portals. Also, most private companies have shifted the job advertisement podium to the internet (company portals and online job application sites) which relentlessly compels social work graduates to use of online job search and application. With time, the online job search and application will undoubtedly be the most dominant job search strategy.

Despite the increased use of internet to search and apply for jobs online, research findings of this study revealed a cadre of social work graduates who still went to companies in person to look for

and apply for jobs. In-person job application is the oldest and most traditional form of job search strategy that involves job applicants physically going to employing organizations enquiring if they are job vacancies, or if they possibly take interns and making general applications with the hope of being considered once there is an opening. Conversely, this job search strategy requires that job applicants go through a preparatory job search phase involving gathering information about potential job leads and potential employers before going there physically through various sources such as post newspaper, employment agencies, recruitment advertising, and campus recruitment.

These findings from this study were not consistent with Sverre (2005) in the 'Journal of Socio-Economics' who postulated that the most common strategy used is by labor-market entrants is responding to direct employer job advertisements, requiring applicants to physically drop application letters and sometimes searching through the employment services. In this study, online job search emerged as the most common used job search strategy while physical/in-person job search came out to be the second used strategy. With the increased use of internet and the technology advancement Zambia has experienced over the years, there is a shift from the old relied upon strategy of job search to relying on the use of internet to search and apply for jobs.

Aside from the relentless use of the internet to search and apply for jobs online, social networks emerged to be a favorable strategy of job search. Findings from this study showed that social work graduates, participants attested to using social networks such as friends and family/relatives as a means to getting a job.

Conceivably social work graduates attempt to develop and maintain relationships with others who have the potential to assist by means of providing useful information about job openings, innovative ideas, and future opportunities that help job seekers transition into the labor market. Thus, the role of social networks cannot be underestimated as they offer an easy way of knowing about employment opportunities and information trends in social workers field of interest as well as a way to entering the labor market. This is consistent with Sverre (2005), whose findings showed that social networks and connections helped graduates in entering the labor market as they offer access to information about job vacancies and entry requirements.

However important to note, is the negative sentiments attributed to the informal networks of friends and family that are not consist with literature and form niche of new knowledge. Research

findings from this study revealed that, some social work graduates had to bribe the people they know in order to get employed as buttressed in the verbal account of P'12 who mentioned that *"[...] sometimes you need to pay someone in order for you to get a job"*. The scarcity of jobs in Zambia has driven social work graduates into desperation to the point of paying off people already existing in the system (employers) in order to get a job. This very act is a hindrance to graduates who neither have friends/relatives nor money to bribe off employers.

Hence, the focus for all social graduates should be on building formal networks of former university professors, workmates, and employers, who based on merit link job seekers to jobs. This is buttressed in the verbal account of <P'16> who accentuated that, *"[.....] I have gotten most jobs through linkages from people I know have worked with before despite not being related in any way. They are the best because they link you to a job based on competencies and not favoritism."*

Arguably, social networks transcend as a good job search strategy given ones' social network contacts are fully aware of the job seekers, qualifications, knowledge, skill, capabilities and work culture. This is in tandem with Tholen et al., (2013), whose findings revealed that in both France and England, graduates who had an opportunity to create networks with former employers while interning had extensive opportunities to familiarize themselves with elite employers and create useful networks that facilitated their transition into employment. By implication, social network contacts are key players in the job networking process. Before job seekers can become employed with the help social networks, contacts must first be able and willing to share the social resources job seekers need for their search. Typically, social network contacts have access to resources and help job seekers by sharing them.

After establishing that social work graduates need to focus on building of formal networks, it begs the question as to how these networks can be built. With regards to this puzzle, volunteerism emerged in this study as key strategy through which social work graduates can gain access to employees as well as the much need work experience. This is in line with Hensvik and Skans (2013) who attested that internships or voluntary work experience tend to be instrumental as a job stretch strategy and the employment rate of graduates was estimated to increase if they had volunteered or worked as interns before and after graduation. This type of experience is becoming

increasingly important in determining entry to a growing range of professions including social work as it lays an entry point for social work graduates into the labor market.

However, this should not go without mentioning the exploitation of social work graduates for free and cheap labor in the force pretense of a prospective job offer and experience. Taken for instance, in some cases this comes with the risk of social workers providing free services to the institution while receiving no salaries and in some rare cases receive minimal allowances for lunch and transport. Hence, the need to put up measures that safeguard the interests of labor market entrants.

In the end, when it comes to job search strategies, applicants use whatever strategy possible to get into the labor market and have to use whatever resources at their disposal. Emanating job search strategies that social workers use include; in -person direct applications to employers, search through the employment services, internships before and after graduation/ voluntary work, internet applications, or utilization of more informal search methods as relatives and friends which are referred to as social networks or social capital. Due to the nature of the job search and recruitment process in the current Zambian labor market, there is and will always be competition for any vacancy and hence social workers are at liberty to use individual strategies and sometimes a combination of two, three or all four discussed job search strategies.

6.3 Motives behind the selected and preferred Job Search Strategies

Following the identification and discussion of the job strategies used by social workers, this theme focuses on understanding the motives for the selected job search strategies. Extending previous job search research (Kanfer et al., 2001; Wanberg et al., 2000 Adler & Kwon, 2002; Brass et al., 2004; Burt, 1992, 1997; Granovetter, 1973, 1995; Lin, 1999; Mouw, 2003), findings from this research reveal that there are motives and underlying reasons behind the preferred/used job search strategies.

To begin with, most companies today place their job advertisements online and frequently require that applications for jobs be submitted online. With regards, findings of this study showed that social work graduates prefer to search and apply for jobs online. The findings also revealed that “ease of use” and “improved chances of getting a job” were respondents’ biggest motivations for using online job search. For example, this was evidenced in verbal account of P’9> who said that, *“online searching and application is convenient for me and easy to apply for jobs without moving*

about.” This is consistent with findings from David Autor in his 2001 Journal of Economic Perspectives article, who wrote: The reasons that online job boards have proliferated are clear. They offer more information, are easier to search, and are potentially more up to date than their textual counterpart, newspaper help wanted advertisement (Autor 2001, 26).

Arguably online job search and application strategy has grown and will perhaps in due time become the most utilised job search strategy given that it offers a wide platform, cost-efficient, convenient and effective way of searching and applying for jobs at one’s comfort. However, it is also imperative to point to challenges faced by graduates while undertaking online job search. Taken for instance, in this study, some issues raised regarding the challenges of online job search were concerns about security of personal information, slow feedback or follow up, poor internet access and connection, filling out long application forms amongst others all of which correspond to findings in Bangfu’s (2014) study in Ghana on the use of the internet as a site for job searching.

Secondly, taking into consideration of social networks, the motives behind the use of this strategy were stated as being embedded in the provision of first-hand information about job openings, upper hand and being favored in the selection process. For instance, P’15> had this to say; *“I prefer social networks because someone in the inner cycle know you which makes it easier for you to know about the job before anyone else and also to get a job. Depending on how strong your social network is, it becomes almost automatic to get the job.”*

Debatably, social networks present a good job search strategy if the applicant has either strong ties to the social contacts and or the social contacts are aware of the applicant’s abilities and capabilities in meeting job requirements and organizations’ needs. Hence, graduates and institutions of higher learning alike need to consider ways of building social capital through creating points of contact between prospective graduates and employers such as encouraging attendance of seminars, colloquiums and other professional meetings, where prospective graduates can meet people from different institutions or organizations.

Finding from this study cannot be discussed comparatively with other studies from literature as most studies done by (Sverre, 2005; Tholen et al., 201; Gardner and Barnes, 2007; Martin, 2009; Kwon and Adler, 2014; Hollenbeck et al., 2017) point to social networks as a means for gaining a competitive advantage in graduate job search, but mention nothing on the motives behind the use

of social networks and hence finds from this study bring out new knowledge on the subject matter that needs to be explored further.

The same can be noted when it comes to the motives behind the use of '*in-person job search/application*' job search strategy, were existing literature (Spokane and Hawks, 1990, p. 111; Sverre, 2005; Kanfer et al., 2001; Van Hooft, Born, Taris, & Van der Flier, 2005a; Wanberg et al., 2000), point to it as being a widely traditional strategy to job search but does not highlight any motives behind the use of this strategy. However, research findings in this study reveal that the motive for the use of '*in-person job search/application*' is attributed to the chance it gives to applicants to showcase their writing skills. It also presents an opportunity for applicants to meet potential employers and assures the applicant that the prospective employer has received the application and potentially archived it.

Finally, when it comes to Volunteerism as a job search strategy, findings in this study suggested social workers opt to volunteer owing to the fact that volunteerism presents learning opportunities and prepares them to smoothly transition into the labour market. This is consistent with Muldoon, R., (2009), who states that the motives behind volunteerism lay in the fact that it helps graduates develop a set of graduate attributes to enhance employability. Arguably volunteering is a useful avenue for the development of graduate attributes and other desirable personal qualities and enhances students' employability.

There are several important and new findings in this research which add to the motives behind volunteering highlighted as including: voluntary work exposes social work graduates to potential employers, and puts them in the inner circle. For example, if there is a job opening, volunteers are always considered first as they are in the inner circle and already known by employers., This advantage cannot be accorded to a new applicant and hence it can be deduced that volunteering offers a fairly competitive advantage to social work graduates.

Ultimately, job seekers use prescribed job search/application procedures by potential employers. Even so, job seekers tend to have their own motives for the preferred strategy as discussed above in the identified job search strategies of; online applications, in-person application, social networks, and lastly volunteerism.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Overview

The previous chapter discussed the findings of the study. This chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations of the study on the perspectives of the research participants on employability of social workers from the University of Zambia in the Zambian labor Market.

7.2 Conclusion

In its most basic sense, graduate employability entails that which it takes for social workers to be employable and work ready. Correspondingly, what constitutes graduate employability is discursively framed as comprising (i) academic qualifications, (ii) work experience, (iii) skills, (iv) individual attributes, (v) religion, (vi) social networks, (vii) belonging to the social work professional body, and (viii) reputation of university as deduced from research findings. Yet, even with all the above eight key framed tenets of graduate employability, social workers are currently struggling to get employed in the Zambian labor market and the relentless need for social workers to be flexible, diverse and employ job search strategies of (in -person/direct applications, online application, social networks, and volunteerism) as they search and apply for jobs.

Notably, when it comes to the actual process of job search and application, job seekers use prescribed job search/application procedures by potential employers such as dropping application letters physically or emailing them to potential employers. Even so, job seekers tend to have their own motives for the preferred strategy such as ‘ease of use’ and ‘improved chances of getting a job using online application or the ‘development of people’s skills and gaining of the much-needed work experience’ that comes with volunteerism. Due to the nature of the job search and recruitment process in the current Zambian labor market, there is and will always be competition for any vacancy and hence social workers are at liberty to be belligerent and flexible enough to use whatever resources at their disposal and decide whether to use individual job search strategies and sometimes a combination of two, three or all four discussed job search strategies.

7.3 Recommendations

In view of the findings above the study makes the following recommendations:

7.3.1 Employers

To begin with, employers should begin to recognize social work as a distinct profession and not just any other social science. Also, graduate employers should use findings from this study as they seek to employ social workers and consider how their perceptions compare with those of others. Employers will also want to consider what steps they might take to better inform universities of their needs (skills, attributes and work experience needed) and work with them to develop even more employable graduates who add value earlier in their careers. In the spirit of making graduates work ready, employers should;

- Offer management trainee programs for new social work graduates
- Offer skill sessions on campus
- Offer internship programs and take more students on meaningful placements

7.3.2 Social Workers Association of Zambia (SWAZ)

To facilitate social work graduate employability, the professional body of social workers should work towards;

- Building the image of the social work profession
- Marketing social work profession
- Regulating and Protecting the Profession of Social Work.

The professional body of social workers should work towards image building and marketing the social work profession through social work campaigns or platforms where people will be able to know what social work is about. SWAZ should work towards regulating and protecting the social work profession, unlike the current situation in Zambia where none social workers have taken up most of the social work jobs.

7.3.3 Institutions of Higher Learning

Arguably, the university is on the right path towards enhancement of social graduate employability. However, there is need to fortify efforts on the following;

- Building student learning oriented links with employers

The University of Zambia should put more effort in building relationships with employers. Social work graduates have raised concerns regarding the gap between what they are taught in university and employer expectations. Of course, it is not expected of graduates to know everything upon graduation, nonetheless they should possess minimum competencies that make them work ready.

Encourage meaningful supervised field placements

In the world of social work education, field placement is a supervised internship at an organization that provides social work services. Placement is a crucial part of any social work program as it teaches students how to think and act like social workers. However, the supervision is quite flawed as social work students are rarely supervised in the field while others tend to be supervised by none social workers which brings into question the mentorship rendered. These tendencies should change for field placements to yield its intended results.

- Inclusion of soft skill development in existing Curriculum

The social work program is designed in such a way that it focuses on skills development i.e. (in research, M&E, project management, administration, and community development among others) for senior students (third and Fourth year) so as to prepare them for the industry. However, the department of social work negates the inculcation of soft skills that help social work graduates in the direct transitioning into the labour market such as, networking skills, interview skills, interpersonal skills, CV development, application letter writing, public speaking among others. There is no need to change the existing curriculum but rather just an incorporation of soft skills in the already existing course components that prepare graduates for transition into the labour market.

7.3.4 Social Work Graduates

Social work graduates have a huge role to play in enhancing their employability and they need to;

- Self-marketing

Social work graduates need to be innovative enough to sell themselves to potential employers, in the CV's, professional profiles, and during interviews. There is need to highlight and package well their vast skills, knowledge base, abilities and capabilities.

- Reflective learning in placement

Field placements present the first opportunity for social work students whilst there are still in school to have a feel of work-life, gain first hand work experience, and become exposed to future employers. Some social workers have gotten jobs through field-placements, hence social workers need to take field placement seriously and learn/gain the much-needed work experience.

Aside from field-placements arranged formally by the school, social work graduates should seek to build their work experience through voluntarism, internships and community work to expand on their work experience horizon.

- **Building social networks**

Social capital has become one of the most useful resources to gaining employment. Not every graduate will have family or relatives in high places to connect them to the labour market, hence social graduates need to take up every given opportunity during workshops, career tours/talks, symposiums, and voluntarism to build formal social networks that eventually become useful in employability.

7.4 Recommendations for further Research

For further research, a similar study could be conducted focusing on employer's perception of social work graduate employability in the Zambian labor market.

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9.0 APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE: BUDGET

Description	Quality	Rate (K)	Total
<u>Stationery</u>			
Reams of Paper	03	45.00	180.00
Blue/black Pens	10	2.00	20.00
Pencils	05	0.50	2.50
Flash disk	02	75.00	150.00
Ink for printer	02	450.00	900.00
Erasers	16	1.50	24.00
Tipex	08	15.00	120.00
Stapler	04	15.00	48.00
Perforator	04	35.00	140.00
Manila Paper	24	2.00	48.00
Diary	04	20.00	80.00
Pins	200	5.00	100.00
Tape Recorder	04	40.00	160.00
Flip Charts	12	25.00	300.00
Markers	08	14.00	112.00
Staples	04	15.00	60.00
Folder Clips	40	1.50	60.00
Field Bag	04	150.00	600.00
Sub-total			3104.50
<u>Secretarial Services</u>			
Research Proposal Printing	55 pages	2.50	137.50
Interview Guide Printing	200	7x1.50	200
Photocopying	200 pages	0.50	100.00
Binding of final copies	2 copies	20.00	40.00
Sub-total			477.50
<u>Professional fees</u>			
Researcher's transport	10 days	100.00	1000.00
Lunch allowance	10 days	50.00	500.00
Talk time for communication		300.00	300.00
Sub-total			1800.00
Grand total			5, 382

APPENDIX Two: WORK PLAN/PROJECT TIME SCALE

ACTIVITY	SCHEDULE								
	July, 2019	August, 2019	September, 2019	October 2019	Nov 2019	Dec 2019	Jan 2020	Jan 2020	
Literature Review									
Preparation of draft proposal writing									
Revision, submission of research proposal									
Preparation of data collection tools									
Pre-testing data collection tools									
Revising the data collection tools in readiness for the field work									
Actual Field Work									
Data Analysis									
Preparation of Draft Report Writing									
Editing the Report									
Report Submission									

APPENDIX Three: Information Sheet

Title of the Research Study: Employability of Social Work graduates in the Zambian labour Market: A perspective of University of Zambia Social Work Graduates.

Who am I?

My name is Chitabanta Jonathan a Master's Student. I am currently pursuing my Master's Degree in Social Work (MSW) at the University of Zambia. As part of my academic requirements of completing a master's degree in social work, am conducting a study on the "*Employability of Social Work graduates in the Zambian labour Market from a perspective of University of Zambia Social Work Graduates (2015-2019)*." You are one of the University of Zambia social work graduates who has been invited to participate in this study. Before you agree to participate in this study, you need to understand why the research is being conducted and be fully aware of the aim/purpose of the study. Please take time to understand the following information about the study. Either you can read it yourself or it can be read out to you. Feel free to ask any questions where you are not clear or if you would like more information. This will help you to make a decision on whether you wish to take part in this study or not. My contact details and those of my supervisor are found at the end of this memo.

Purpose of the Study

This study is aimed at exploring the employability of Social Work graduates in the Zambian labour Market from the perspective of University of Zambia Social Work Graduates. It is hoped for that the findings of this study will help address the gaps and expand on the existing body of literature on the nature and diversity of social work practice in the Zambian labour market.

It is also hoped that the study will contribute to the scientific knowledge of on-going global scientific debates on graduate employability from the perspective of social work graduates in the Zambian context.

The research also has potential to contribute to the existing theories on employability by providing empirical evidence into skills that enhance graduate employability. Lastly the research may help in the redesigning of the curriculum to reflect what obtains in the industry and facilitate collaboration between the training institutions and the labour market. The study has the following as its objectives:

- To understand the lived experiences of social work graduates regarding what it takes to be employed
- To find out from the point of view of social work graduates the strategies they use to get a job
- To understand the motives for the selected job, search strategies.

Do I have to participate?

Participation is voluntary. If you decide to take part, I will give you the information sheet which you will keep. I will also request you to consent by way of signing a form. Kindly note, that you have the right to withdraw from the study anytime without even giving reasons. You are also free not to answer certain questions and can stop the interview any time you feel like.

Interview Process

If you decide to participate in this study, I will have a one-on-one interview with you where I

will ask questions. With your permission, I intend to audio-record and transcribe the interview. The interview will last about 1 hour and you will decide where and when you would like us to have the interview.

Risks

There are no known risks of participating in this study as you have the right to answer only those questions that you are comfortable with. If you feel some of the questions in the interview are too personal or if talking about them makes you feel uncomfortable, you are free not to answer.

Benefits

There will be no direct benefits to you, but your participation is likely to help other social work graduates who are in the job search process. It will also provide insight skills that enhance social work graduate employability and may help in the redesigning of the curriculum to reflect what obtains in the industry and facilitate collaboration between the training institutions and with the labour market.

Reimbursements

Please note that no incentives will be given to you for participating in this study. However, your willingness to spare some time so as to participate in this study will be highly appreciated.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

Everything that will be discussed during the interview will be kept strictly confidential. You are not obliged to provide your name. All your identifiers will be sufficiently removed from the transcripts. This will ensure that you are protected from being identified. The interview will not be discussed with other people, except my supervisors are the only ones who will see the anonymized transcripts. The reason for them seeing the transcripts will be to ensure quality of data being collected.

Findings

The information will be mainly used for academic purposes. The findings of the study will provide an insight into the concept of graduate employability. Also the findings of this study will help address the gaps and expand on the existing literature on the nature and diversity of social work practice in the Zambian labour market and may help in the redesigning of the curriculum to reflect what obtains in the industry and facilitate collaboration between the higher education institutions and with the labour market.

For any further information, you can contact UNZA Research Ethics Committee P.O. BOX 32379, Lusaka. For any question, you may call the following people:

1. Principal Investigator:

Names: Chitabanta Jonathan

Department: Social Work and Sociology

Cell No: +260975983491

Email: jonathanchisanga@gmail.com

2. Supervisor:

Dr. Masauso Chirwa

Mobile: +260960633642

Email: masauso.chirwa@unza.zm

Thank you!

APPENDIX Four: Consent Form

Research Topic: Employability of Social Work graduates in the Zambian labour Market: A perspective of University of Zambia Social Work Graduates.

Research Supervisors: Dr. Masauso Chirwa

Kindly tick the appropriate one

I hereby agree to voluntarily take part in the study. **Yes/No**

The researcher has given me the information sheet. **Yes/No**

The researcher has explained to me in writing the purpose of the study. **Yes/No**

I agree that he can audio-record the interview. **Yes/No**

I understand that the information will be confidential and that all personal information will be removed to protect my identity. **Yes/No**

The researcher has explained that I have the right to withdraw from the study anytime I want to and I am not obliged to give reasons. **Yes/No**

.....
Signature

Date:.....

APPENDIX FIVE: Interview Guide

Employability of Social Work graduates in the Zambian labour Market: A perspective of University of Zambia Social Work Graduates.

Date of interview

Age of participant (s)

Sex of Participant (s)

Marital status

Area of Residence.....

Occupation of the participant (s).....

Highest education attained

THEMATIC AREA 1: What it Takes for One to Be Employed

1. People do have their own experiences, regarding what it takes to get a job, please share with me what it took for you to get the first, second or other jobs after graduating from the university?

Probe on experiences; academic qualifications, skills, previous experiences/field work/internship, personal attributes, achievements

THEMATIC AREA 2: Job Search Strategies

2. People search for jobs in various ways, before you got this Job, what were you doing to try to get this job?
3. Regarding this job, what did you actually do to get this job?

Probe for the following if not mentioned spontaneously; Social networks, Internet job sites/applications, recruitment agency, mobile phone search, formal physical applications, Public service commission etc.

THEMATIC AREA 3: Motives for Selected Job Search Strategies

4. People have various motives for the job search strategies, what are the motives for the mentioned Job search strategies?

Probe further according the above mentioned motives

5. Amongst the job search strategy you have previously used, which one would you describe as the most effective method of searching for employment?
6. What would you recommend Higher Learning Institutions do to make social workers employable?
7. From your own experience, what would you recommend employers do to make social workers employable?

Thank You

APPENDIX SIX: Ethical Clearance Certificate



THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA

DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH AND GRADUATE STUDIES

Great East Road | P.O. Box 32378 | Lusaka 10101 | Tel: +260-211-290 258/291 777
Fax: +260 211-290 258/253 952 | Email: director@dirgs.unza.zm | Website: www.unza.zm

APPROVAL OF STUDY

18th December, 2019

REF NO. HSSREC-2019-NOV-026

Mr. Chitabanta Jonathan
LUSAKA

Dear Mr. Chitabanta,

RE: "EMPLOYABILITY OF SOCIAL WORK GRADUATES IN THE ZAMBIAN LABOUR MARKET: A PERSPECTIVE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA SOCIAL WORK GRADUATES"

Reference is made to your protocol dated 26th November, 2019. HSSREC resolved to approve this study and your participation as Principal Investigator for a period of one year.

Review Type	Fast-track review	Approval No. HSSREC-2019- NOV-026
Approval and Expiry Date	Approval Date: 18 th December, 2019	Expiry Date: 17 th December, 2020
Protocol Version and Date	Version - Nil,	17 th December, 2020
Information Sheet, Consent Forms and Dates	• English.	To be provided
Consent form ID and Date	Version - Nil	To be provided
Recruitment Materials	Nil	Nil
Other Study Documents	Questionnaire	17 th December, 2020
Number of Participants Approved for Study		17 th December, 2020

Specific conditions will apply to this approval. As Principal Investigator it is your responsibility to ensure that the contents of this letter are adhered to. If these are not adhered to, the approval may be suspended. Should the study be suspended, study sponsors and other regulatory authorities will be informed.

1

Excellence in Teaching, Research and Community Service

Conditions of Approval

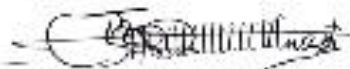
- No participant may be involved in any study procedure prior to the study approval or after the expiration date.
- All unanticipated or Serious Adverse Events (SAEs) must be reported to HSSREC within 5 days.
- All protocol modifications must be approved by HSSREC prior to implementation unless they are intended to reduce risk (but must still be reported for approval). Modifications will include any change of investigator/s or site address.
- All protocol deviations must be reported to HSSREC within 5 working days.
- All recruitment materials must be approved by HSSREC prior to being used.
- Principal investigators are responsible for initiating Continuing Review proceedings. HSSREC will only approve a study for a period of 12 months.
- It is the responsibility of the PI to renew his/her ethics approval through a renewal application to HSSREC.
- Where the PI desires to extend the study after expiry of the study period, documents for study extension must be received by HSSREC at least 30 days before the expiry date. This is for the purpose of facilitating the review process. Documents received within 30 days after expiry will be labelled "late submissions" and will incur a penalty fee of K500.00. No study shall be renewed whose documents are submitted for renewal 30 days after expiry of the certificate.
- Every 6 (six) months a progress report form supplied by The University of Zambia Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee as an IRB must be filled in and submitted to us. There is a penalty of K500.00 for failure to submit the report.
- When closing a project, the PI is responsible for notifying, in writing or using the Research Ethics and Management Online (REMO), both HSSREC and the National Health Research Authority (NHRA) when ethics certification is no longer required for a project.
- In order to close an approved study, a Closing Report must be submitted in writing or through the REMO system. A Closing Report should be filed when data collection has ended and the study team will no longer be using human participants or animals or secondary data or have any direct or indirect contact with the research participants or animals for the study.
- Filing a closing report (rather than just letting your approval lapse) is important as it assists HSSREC in efficiently tracking and reporting on projects. Note that some funding agencies and sponsors require a notice of closure from the IRB which had approved the study and can only be generated after the Closing Report has been filed.

- A reprint of this letter shall be done at a fee.
- All protocol modifications must be approved by HSSREC by way of an application for an amendment prior to implementation unless they are intended to reduce risk (but must still be reported for approval). Modifications will include any change of investigator's or site address or methodology and methods. Many modifications entail minimal risk adjustments to a protocol and/or consent form and can be made on an Expedited basis (via the IRB Chair). Some examples are: format changes, correcting spelling errors, adding key personnel, minor changes to questionnaires, recruiting and changes, and so forth. Other, more substantive changes, especially those that may alter the risk-benefit ratio, may require Full Board review. In all cases, except where noted above regarding subject safety, any changes to any protocol document or procedure must first be approved by HSSREC before they can be implemented.

Should you have any questions regarding anything indicated in this letter, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us at the above indicated address.

On behalf of HSSREC, we would like to wish you all the success as you carry out your study.

Yours faithfully,



Dr. J. Mwanza

Dip. Clin. Med. Sc., BA. M.Soc., PhD

**CHAIRPERSON, THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL
SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE - IRB**

cc: Director, Directorate of Research and Graduate Studies
Assistant Director (Research), Directorate of Research and Graduate Studies
Assistant Registrar (Research), Directorate of Research and Graduate Studies

APPENDIX SEVEN: Introductory Letter



**THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA
SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIOLOGY**

Telephone: +260211290020
Fax: 260-1-296020
Email: adg.hsd@unza.zm

P.O. Box 32379
Lusaka, Zambia

18th December, 2019

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: REQUEST FOR INFORMATION ON RESEARCH TOPIC

Kindly refer to the subject above.

I write to ask for permission to allow my final year Masters Student (Jonathan Chitabanta, Computer Number 20170245891) to visit you. He is pursuing Masters of Social Work degree. The purpose of his visit is to come and request for information pertaining to his research topic: **'The Employability of Social Work Graduates in the Zambian Labour Market: A Perspective of University of Zambia Social Work Graduates.'**

The student has a mandate to conduct research as part of his partial fulfillment of Masters of Social Work. In this regard, you have been identified as the key informants concerning his research topic.

Your assistance will be highly appreciated.

Yours Faithfully,


Patrick Chanda

Acting Head, Department of Social Work and Sociology
Email: patrick.chanda@unza.zm



Dissertation Data Analysis

Nodes

Name	Description	Files	References
Demographic Information	This Includes participants background information such as;Age of participant (s) Sex of Participant (s) Marital status Area of Residence..... Occupation of the participant (s)..... Highest education attained	0	0
DI 1 Gender		13	13
Female		6	6
Male		9	9
DI 2 Age		15	15
DI 3 Marrital Status		14	14
Married		2	3
Single		12	12
DI 3 Residential		14	14
DI 4 Educational Background		16	16
DI 5 Occupation		15	17
Duration to get a Job		15	16
Emotions about getting a Job		1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
Physical		1	1
Psychological		2	2
Graduates Employability	lived experiences regarding what it takes to be employed	5	6
Accademic qualifications		12	19
Aptitude Test		4	4
Knowledge		6	11
Skills		12	21
Member of a proffesional Body		2	2
Reccomendations		4	5
Reputation of University		4	4
Skills		8	13
Work Experience		11	17
Block Fieldwork 2		3	4
Volunteerism		5	6
Individual Employability Atributes		6	6
Adaptability Skills		1	1
Adhearance to Organisational and standards		2	2
Confidence		1	1
Consistency and Persistence		1	1

Name	Description	Files	References
Courtesy		1	1
Creativity and Innovation		1	1
Dependable		1	2
Empathy		1	1
Good Working and Professional relationships		1	1
Hardwork		1	1
Job Interview Skills		3	3
Job search Skills		0	0
Professionalism		2	5
Public Speaking		1	1
Sacrifice and Commitment		1	1
Writing a Good CV		1	1
Job Search Strategies		3	3
Online Applications		13	21
Physical Application		11	16
Posting Application Letters		2	2
Social Networks		10	15
Downside to Social Networks		3	3
Volunteering		3	4

Name	Description	Files	References
Joining Professional Bodies		1	1
Marketing the Social Work Profession		11	16
Negatives		11	17
Positives		4	4
Motives for the Job Search Strategy		12	15
Relevance Of Undergraduate Social Work Course		13	17
Role of Employers In Graduate Employability		4	4
Role of Higher Learning Institutions in Employability		9	11
Role of SWAZ		3	4
Selling and Packaging Yourself Well to Employers		5	10