

EDITORIAL

A number of social factors such as poverty, HIV/Aids and violence contribute to the vulnerability of children and youth; and the impact of these factors often inhibits their sound development. Most of the articles in this issue address challenges that children and youth regularly present to the Social Work profession.

Experiences of street children; children engaged in inappropriate sexual activities; orphaned children heading households; child-parent relationships following divorce – these are explored in four of the articles, while another article offers experiences, agency and aspirations of young men and women who left school before the completion of Grade 12 and who have not found full-time employment.

A pair of articles address concerns such as violence and trauma. In one, gender differences in the relation between binge drinking and violence are set out and highlighted; in the other students' traumatic experiences and their possible effect on their studies and future careers as social workers are evaluated.

This issue concludes with some discriminating insights in the field of supervision. The similarities and/or differences in coaching, mentoring and consultation as supervision activities are carefully addressed.

In *Life on the streets of Durban: No millionaire ending*, **Sewpaul, Osthus, Mhone, Sibilo, and Sithembile** report on the experiences and survival strategies of children and youth living on the streets. From their findings it is evident that despite the intensity and extent of problems in their home environments, the children and youth who participated in the study did not experience street life as a better option. Home, shelter and street were for them equally bad; street life was “no millionaire ending”.

Booyens and Crause's article *Excluded from education and work: Perception of youth* deals with the experiences, agency and aspirations of young men and women who left school before the completion of Grade 12 and who were not yet in full-time employment. The experiences, agency and aspirations of the youth are related to two key life-transitions: Education for life and work, and starting a productive working life. The authors put forward some useful considerations for social service professionals who engage with at risk youth.

Child-on-child sexual abuse: Results of a survey in Johannesburg is an article presented by **Omar and Patel**. They conducted a survey with children under twelve years who engaged in inappropriately sexualised behaviour. The authors identified three influences that may contribute to the conditions under which these children offend: the maturational stage of their development which may predispose them to sexual exploration; environmental influences; and the family. The findings highlight the need for social work theory and social work practice that consider the eco-systemic nature of the phenomenon.

Nziyane and Alpaslan in *The realities of orphaned children living in child-headed households* report on research conducted with a sample comprised of orphaned children heading households, their extended family members and social workers. The authors found that orphaned children living in child-headed households experienced pervasive adversities and perilous conditions, which began with the illness of their parents. The study also revealed the remarkable resilience and resourcefulness of these children in dealing with their situation.

Adolescents' perspectives on child-parent relationships following parental divorce, are presented in the article by **Makofane and Mogoane**. Referring to Minuchin's structural family therapy, the views of twenty adolescents on their relationships with their custodial parents, non-custodial parents and siblings, including the subsystems that emerged following parental divorce, are discussed. The study offers significant findings regarding the feelings of adolescents that inhibited some of them from having healthy relations with their parents and siblings. The authors make suggestions for social work intervention in under-resourced areas.

In the face of growing alcohol-related violence against women globally, and especially in South Africa, the article *Gender differences in the relation between binge drinking and violence* by **Phetlho-Thekisho, Ryke, and Strydom** demonstrates a need to re-open debates on prevailing gender differences in most societies. The authors used an ecological model to identify and interpret the risk factors involved. They found that despite the gaps in the conceptualisation of this model, it does provide a holistic view of the problem for comprehensive intervention.

Emphasising a person-centred perspective, **Wade and Schenck** conducted a study of trauma with the aim of accessing unique descriptions of the concept of trauma in the South African context. The authors discuss the perceptions and experiences of trauma of 128 fourth-level Social Work students at a South African university. The findings of the study suggest a person-centred view of trauma that reflects on the person's perceptions and experiences of the self. Questions arose regarding students' traumatic experiences and their possible effect on their studies and future careers as social workers.

The article by **Engelbrecht** on coaching, mentoring and consultation addresses the similarities and/or differences in coaching, mentoring and consultation as supervision activities. The paper examines the core determinants of each concept and concludes with a presentation of a South African context specific approach to social work supervision activities. The author holds that all the activities concerned are part of an overarching supervision process, and suggests that employment of the activities should be developmental in nature.

It is our sincere hope that the sharing of experiences of child and youth related work in the present issue will have theoretical as well as practical value to educators, practitioners and students. We also hope that some of the crucial issues raised and pursued here might open eyes and minds, and mobilise support for addressing the current challenges facing all stakeholders working in the field of child and youth care.

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