THE ROLE OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN PROMOTING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES FROM NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS' PERSPECTIVE IN TSHWANE

by

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ABSTRACT

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN PROMOTING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES FROM NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS' PERSPECTIVE IN TSHWANE

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In 2015, the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* was adopted by state nations across the globe to eradicate poverty in all its forms, combat inequality, preserve the planet, create sustainable economic growth and foster social inclusion (United Nations [UN], 2015:5). Social work is committed to contributing to sustainable development by responding to social and economic injustices (Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development, 2012).

The goal of this research study was to explore and describe the role of social workers in promoting environmental justice for sustainable communities from a non-government perspective in Tshwane.

The researcher adopted a qualitative research approach and an instrumental case study design. The sample of eight participants was purposively selected from non-governmental organisations in Tshwane and data was collected through semi-structured one-on-one interviews.

The findings of the study indicate that participants had some understanding of environmental justice and that both people and the natural environment should be equally protected and advocated in social work interventions. Although some current interventions reflect an environmental focus, participants were not consciously aware of their role in environmental

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justice and sustainable development. The study concluded that social workers understand the challenges that are respectively posed by the social and natural environment but not necessarily how they are intertwined and related to environmental injustices and green social work. Recommendations include education and awareness-raising of social workers on environmental justice and adopting green social work as a practice model.

Key words

Environmental justice

Sustainable development

Green social work

Sustainable communities

Non-Government Organisations (NGOs)

Tshwane

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CHAPTER 1: GENERAL ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1   INTRODUCTION

In 2015, the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* [hereafter 2030 Agenda] was adopted by state nations across the globe to eradicate poverty in all its forms, combat inequality, preserve the planet, create sustainable economic growth and foster social inclusion (United Nations [UN], 2015:5). Social work is committed to contributing to sustainable development through the Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development [hereafter Global Agenda] (2012). The key dimensions of sustainable development are social, economic and environmental development (UN, 2015). In sustainable development, both people and the planet are equally important. Climate change and the rapid depletion of natural resources are affecting the lives of people in general, while the natural resource depletion and the adverse impact of environmental degradation and pollution undermine the ability of communities to develop and grow (International Association of Schools of Social Work [IASSW], 2016). Environmental disasters exacerbate existing socio-economic and cultural inequalities (Dominelli, 2014a:344) which emphasises the link between social instability and the physical and human environment.

The four themes of the Global Agenda are interlinked, but theme three in particular refers to promoting environmental and community sustainability which also has been the international focus of social work intervention for the period 2017-2018. The commitment includes building community capacity to respond to environmental challenges and human and natural disasters (Global Agenda, 2012). It calls upon social workers to align their activities and programmes with development initiatives that integrate the environment with human dimensions (IASSW, 2016).

In the framework of sustainable development, social work concerns itself with broadening the notion of the environment to include the natural world, thus, shifting largely from an anthropocentric to an ecocentric focus (Gray, Coates & Hetherington, 2013:298). Social workers are compelled to act on environmental injustices because of their ethical mandate to address social injustice (Erickson, 2012:33). Social work engages in the environmental discourse with regard to issues that contribute to human dilemmas, however, despite having much to offer to the debate, lags behind in claiming the territory of the natural world (Dominelli, 2014a:339; Besthorn, 2013:33). The study intends to contribute to this debate by looking at environmental issues for sustainable communities through the lens of environmental justice which incorporates social justice from a non-government perspective. The study's emphasis on the role of social workers in promoting environmental justice is thus

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intended to contribute to social work practice and policy that promote environmental justice and sustainable communities. As indicated above, the focus is aligned with the third theme of the Global Agenda (Global Agenda, 2012), promoting community and environmental sustainability.

The relevant concepts to the study are as follows:

- **Social work and green social work**

Social work in South Africa is underpinned by a developmental approach (Republic of South Africa [RSA], Ministry for Welfare and Population Development, 1997). The study embraces a developmental and green perspective for social work practice. Developmental social work 'affirms the social work profession's commitment to the eradication of poverty, recognises the link between welfare and economic development, and construes welfare as an investment in human capital rather than a drain on limited government resources' (Gray, Agillias, Mupedziswa & Mugumbate, 2017:2). Green social work transcends a narrow focus on poverty eradication to include social workers working in close collaboration with local people in their communities, and to develop empowering and sustainable relationships between them and their environments within a framework of human rights, social and environmental justice (Dominelli, 2012:196).

- **Environmental justice**

Environmental justice is important to ensure that the human right to live in a clean, safe, and healthy environment is enjoyed by all people, as the world's poorest, vulnerable and oppressed people often live in the most degraded environments and have no control over resources (Hawkins, 2010:68). For purposes of this study, the inter-relatedness between environmental justice and community sustainability is based on the view of Schlosberg (2007:57) that 'environmental justice is not simply an individual experience', but 'embedded in one's community'.

- **Sustainable communities**

Sustainable communities require that people act as stewards of their natural environment. According to Rainey, Robinson, Allen and Christy (2003:709) "...stewardship implies that current and future activities do not degrade local resources such that the community becomes less productive and/or less attractive over time." In this study sustainable communities are regarded as healthy and inclusive societies, who have access to water and

sanitation, renewable energy for all, inclusive and safe housing and food security (IASSW, 2016). Furthermore, sustainable communities promote social, economic and environmental justice by focussing on interventions that eradicate poverty and combatting inequality while preserving the planet (UN, 2015:5). In addition, the study regards community participation as a vital tool for sustainable communities (Schlosberg, 2007:57, 64).

Research site

The study was conducted among NGOs in the Gauteng Province, which is one of the nine provinces in South Africa, containing a cluster of cities, towns and urban centres (The Gauteng City-Region, 2018). The non-governmental organisations (NGOs) include TLF (Tshwane Leadership Foundation (TLF), Kings Hope Foundation, SA Cares, Carenet, Kamcare, and The Salvation Army.

1.2   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A shift to ecological justice is important in the discourse of environmental social work and social work's role in environmental and community sustainability as it embraces environmental and social justice in responding to environmental issues. However, adopting an ecological justice perspective does not automatically translate into using the ecological approach as theoretical framework for environmental social work. Dominelli (2012:8) argues that the 'deep ecological' approach still privileges people by focussing largely on the interaction between people and social and physical environments where people rather act upon the physical environments as opposed to integrating the physical, social, economic, political and cultural environments. Integrated environments are required for holistic social work practice that intends to change existing 'inegalitarian social relationships, power relations and resource distribution systems' (Dominelli, 2012:8).

Therefore, the study adopted green social work (Dominelli, 2012) as a theoretical framework. Dominelli (2012:8) defines green social work as that part of practice "that intervenes to protect the environment and enhance people's well-being by integrating the interdependencies between people and their socio-cultural, economic and physical environments, and among peoples within an egalitarian framework that addresses prevailing structural inequalities and unequal distribution of power and resources". To realise human rights, social and environmental justice and social inclusion requires a more equitable sharing of the benefits from the earth for all and new paradigms of production and consumption (Dominelli, 2012:198). In this, Dominelli sees a role for social workers in advocating for changes; doing research that shows the suffering of the poor and

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marginalised and promoting robust resilience in communities through capacity building and developing partnerships (Dominelli, 2012:198).

In this study, the role of social workers was explored in relation to how they are engaged in promoting environmental justice by integrating the environment into social and economic development interventions and/or activities. This includes their role in advocating for service users, building communities capacity, and working in partnerships for sustainable development outcomes.

1.3   PROBLEM STATEMENT

The 2030 Agenda with its seventeen sustainable development goals (SDGs) and 169 targets emphasises that both people and planet are important in human development that leaves nobody behind (UN, 2015). To this end, the call for integration of environmental preservation and human well-being is a growing movement of sustainable development (Erickson, 2012:187). Theme three of the Global Agenda (2012), promoting environmental and community sustainability, underpins the rationale for this study. The commitments of the Global Agenda are aligned with the 2030 Agenda (2015) which positions social work well to contribute to sustainable development. Sustainable development includes social, economic and environmental dimensions (UN, 2015) and implies a human and planet focus for social work.

Social work's longstanding focus on people-in-environment emphasises the interaction between people and their social environment (Besthorn, 2013; Dominelli, 2014b; Erickson, 2012). Within the context of sustainable development, the discourse on environmental social work has gradually shifted to include environmental justice and the natural environment. This implies an ecological focus where social work looks at environmental issues through both an environmental and social justice lens. Poor and marginalised societies, who are the key focus of social work, are more severely affected by environmental degradation and climate change (IFSW, 2015). In view of their ethical mandate to address social injustice, social workers are compelled to act in addressing environmental injustices (Erickson, 2012:184). To contribute to sustainable communities, social work should integrate issues of the natural environment with human development into existing social work practice models (Erickson, 2012:184), and develop integrated social and economic models that takes the natural environment into consideration (Dominelli, 2012). This study intended to explore the role of social workers in promoting environmental justice that contributes to sustainable communities.

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The research question for the study was:

What is the role of social workers in promoting environmental justice for sustainable communities from non-government organisations' perspective in Tshwane?

The sub-questions were as follows:

- What are social workers' understanding of environmental justice?
- What activities and interventions are social workers engaged in that address environmental justice issues?
- How do social workers contribute to sustainable communities?
- What strategies do social workers propose in promoting environmental justice for sustainable communities?

1.4   GOAL AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The goal of the study was:

To explore and describe the role of social workers in promoting environmental justice for sustainable communities from an NGO perspective in Tshwane

The objectives of the study were as follows:

- To conceptualise environmental justice and community sustainability in social work within the context of green social work.
- To explore social workers understanding of environmental justice.
- To explore and describe the activities and interventions that social workers engage with in addressing environmental justice issues.
- To explore and describe social workers' contribution to sustainable communities.
- To propose guidelines for the role of social workers in promoting environmental justice for sustainable communities.

1.5   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study used a qualitative research approach which allowed the researcher to collect data that represents the in-depth views of participants (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:91). The researcher intended to gain in-depth information on how social workers view their role in promoting environmental justice for sustainable communities. The research paradigm was interpretivism which focusses on the understanding of social workers' experiences in

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practice and in the case of this study, the meaning that they give to the role of social work in promoting environmental justice (Rubin & Babbie, 2013:55). The study was both applied and basic and had explorative and descriptive goals (Fouché & Delport, 2011:64-65; Jansen, 2016:9). As the study included sources of descriptive perceptions, as well as providers of information that can influence future social work and practice, the study's design was an instrumental case study (John & Rule, 2011:8; Padgett, 2017:36).

The study population was social workers in Gauteng, Tshwane, working in non-governmental organisations. Purposive sampling was used to select 10 social workers (Strydom, 2011b:232). Data was collected through one-on-one semi-structured interviews guided by an interview schedule (Greeff, 2011:352). Thematic analysis was used to analyse data into themes (Clarke, Braun & Hayfield, 2015:230-245). Trustworthiness of data was obtained through credibility, transferability, auditability and confirmability (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:191). The research methodology is further discussed in Chapter 3 as well as the ethical aspects relevant to the study.

1.6   DIVISION OF THE RESEARCH REPORT

The research report is divided into four chapters.

Chapter 1 focusses on the general orientation of the study, a brief description about the study's theoretical framework, rationale, problem statement, goal and objectives, and the research methodology.

Chapter 2 provides an in-depth look into the research study's topic, by giving an introduction into the relevance and definition of the topic, the various roles of social work relating to the topic, and the theoretical framework upon which this study is based.

In Chapter 3, the research methodology is discussed, including the research approach, type of research, research design, the research population and sample, the research methodology, analyses, ethical considerations and limitations of the study. Furthermore, the findings of the study are presented and discussed.

Chapter 4 presents the key findings of the study, draws conclusions and makes recommendations from the study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The United Nations provides an overview of twenty-two global problems, of which at least fourteen involve the environment and the survival of not only people, but the physical eco-systems that exist (Global Issues Overview, s.a.). To name a few, some of the global issues include atomic energy, children, decolonisation, democracy, human rights, peace and security, water, women, and climate change. There is a parallel between these global problems and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda (UN, 2015), which was first implemented in January 2016. The problem of atomic energy relates to clean energy (SDG number 7); issues related to children relate to good health and well-being (SDG number 3); water issues relate with clean water, sanitation and life below water (SDG numbers 6 and 14), and women's issues relate to gender equality (SDG number 5).

The parallels between the global issues and the SDGs show that the SDGs are 17 global goals which commit governments of signatory states to achieve a world of equality and sustainability through partnerships that focus on the environmental, social, economic and political aspects of society (UN, 2015; UNICEF, 2015).

Although all people and creatures need natural resources to survive today and in the future, some societies are benefitting more than others. The social and economic divide between rich and poor countries is increasing, which means that some countries have a social, economic and political advantage over other people and the environment, while marginalised countries lag behind in human development progress (Dylan, 2013:73; Wilson, 2011:18; Patel, 2015:5). Moreover, it is the most vulnerable groups, like the elderly and children, who are left being socially and environmentally vulnerable (Poverty eradication, 2018; United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund [UNICEF], 2015:6; UNICEF, 2011:3).

The global society is finding itself in a struggle with challenges which are both human-made and natural. One of the ways that social workers can play a role in dealing with these challenges is by promoting environmental justice. This shift is evident in literature on social work's awareness of the intricate balance between people and the environment, the need for social work to participate in policy planning and decision-making in this regard, and to expand social work's understanding of the physical environment's role in people's lives (Alston, 2015:359; Dominelli, 2014a:2). Hamlin (2008:145-146) states that since

environmental justice became separated from other human liberties that have been more sought-after (such as civil and political rights), it became "a latter-day indulgence, entirely dispensable".

Social workers worldwide have taken a political and professional stance to work towards contributing to environmental and social justice, by partnering with organisations in various contexts by adopting and implementing the commitments of the Global Agenda (2012). Social work is able to uphold human rights, social justice, social and economic inequality, environmental justice and the well-being of people and natural eco-systems (Alston, 2015:360; Dominelli, 2012:3). To remain relevant to the contemporary situations that people face, the social work profession must understand the inextricable connection between people, the environment, and the economy.

This literature review starts with a definition of environmental justice and a consideration about where environmental justice should be in relation to world issues. Furthermore, the relationship between social work and environmental justice is discussed as well as who environmental justice is targeted at, namely the communities that are negatively affected by various kinds of social and environmental injustices. In the following discussion, some consideration is given for the specific role that social work has in relation to environmental justice. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary.

2.2   DEFINITION OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

The term environmental justice is often interchanged with other terms such as ecology, environmentalism, sustainability, sustainable development, eco-justice, environmental human rights and eco-efficiency (Dylan, 2013:64; Hawkins, 2010:69). Although these terms are closely related, they are not the same, so it is important for social work scholars and professionals to understand what is meant by environmental justice (Hawkins, 2010:69).

Hawkins (2010:74) explains environmental justice to mean that current and future generations of society have the right to develop in a clean, safe and healthy environment. Dominelli (2014a:133) defines it in a similar manner, adding that it involves sustainably sharing the responsibilities and benefits that are related to maintaining the earth's resources for everyone's benefit – creatures, people and ecosystems alike. Besthorn (2013:34) mirrors Dominelli's explanation of environmental justice by describing it as simple logic: since all people depend on the environment, its resources should be used and protected for the current and future generation's survival, without harming the Earth's natural capital. Human society is entitled to a life that is not burdened with an environment fraught with

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environmental challenges, but this needs to be considered through a human rights and social justice lens.

A human right stems from the notion that people have to have what they deserve, to be free to receive what they deserve, to be free to make their own decisions, to have inherent dignity as a human being, and to use the resources that they have (Androff, 2016:27; Wronka, 2011:439). It can thus be argued that environmental justice is a right, not only for humans but also for the natural environment.

There are other important notions that are strongly associated with environmental justice, including social justice, ecological justice, the eradication of economic, structural and political inequalities, the challenge against the neoliberal and consumerist ideologies, and broadening the person-in-environment paradigm in social work practice. These notions are discussed next.

2.2.1   Environmental justice, social justice and ecological justice

Environmental justice and social justice are two concepts starting to conjoin as important postulation for sustainable development (Besthorn, 2013:33). Social justice refers to the fair distribution of opportunities and benefits to every member of society, where people have equal responsibility and benefit for what has been distributed to them (Besthorn, 2012:254; Bell, 2016:3; Wing Sue, Rasheed & Rasheed, 2016:36). Although authors (Hölscher, 2011:45; Huegler & Lyons, 2011:38) have explained that social justice still needs clarity in definition (because structural and political inequalities have created ambiguity about what social justice means), social justice remains a fundamental ethical beacon for the social work profession.

Social justice places focus on society's duty to ensure that each person is entitled to the minimum that he/she deserves (where all people have the same rights and advocate against inequity). Environmental justice is the focus on society's duty to sustainably ensure that the environment is taken care of (that people do not act with inequity towards the environment and themselves) (Banarjee, 2005:10; Besthorn, 2013:32, 35).

Besthorn (2013:33) states that social work's concept of social justice is incomplete without considering environmental justice, meaning that environmental justice is just as significant as social justice. The United Nations pursues environmental justice as a human right and this is indicative of the significance this bears towards society (Hawkins, 2011:74). Although every person should take responsibility for using the environment sustainably, this is not always

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possible considering the spectrum of the poor and the rich. On the one hand, people affected by poverty cannot always afford new technologies and participate in the cause towards environmental justice (Dominelli, 2012:3). On the other hand, material consumerism and multinational companies' interests often thwart attempts to reduce exhausting resources such as land, coal and oil (Dominelli, 2012:3). Poor people are therefore more exposed to environmental injustice and material consumerism thrives on unfair use of the environment, which emphasises that social justice cannot be considered without environmental justice.

An aspect to consider about environmental justice is the impact that human culture has on people and the natural environment. Human activity has, for the most part, been focussed on what people can benefit from the environment, which is also described as an anthropocentric culture (Besthorn, 2013:36). The anthropocentric culture has, unfortunately, had a negative effect on vulnerable communities and the natural environment. Zapf (2010:35) explains that some cultures, like Westernised cultures, believe the natural environment to be insignificant and a mere object for human pursuits. Societies should focus on what is fair for people (especially vulnerable groups) and the environment, rather than on a culture heavily focussed on material consumption, improving standards of living, and increasing economic growth, all for the exclusive betterment of human society. Protecting and advocating for the environment mean considering what the environment is for the vulnerable, for natural order and for all future generations, instead of being merely self-seeking societies that do not advocate for environmental justice (Zapf, 2010:36).

Besthorn (2013:36) explains that the ethical decision-making that upholds the interests of the natural world and the human world is where environmental justice encounters ecological justice. Combining the interests of the natural world and the human world, in scholarly terms, is called radical egalitarian ecological justice (Besthorn, 2013:37). Ecological justice forms part of environmental justice by advocating for the equal moral standing between humans and the natural environment – in other words, that humans and the natural environment have the same interests and that ethics should be the same across the board. Miller, Hayward and Shaw (2012:271) agree with this definition and add that humans should not be the focus of existence but should rather be considered as inextricably part of the entire natural realm in Earth and beyond.

Dominelli (2012:6) takes the argument a step further and explains that environmental justice is also about fighting against the structural and economic inequalities which serve a minority in society, while the vulnerable poor and the natural environment are neglected. As much as industrialisation and urbanisation have played an important role in creating economic growth

and an increase in standards of livelihood, the economic means and profits should benefit future generations and equally, the environment. Therefore, environmental justice would also involve a change in the current economic paradigm, so that all stakeholders that make up society are considered, that is both people and the natural environment (Dominelli, 2012:6).

Considering the above descriptions linked to environmental justice, it can be conclusively stated that environmental justice is about fairness to the environment and the way people sustainably manage the natural environment. The sustainable use of the environment would benefit current generations, but also future generations and ecosystems. Just as people are entitled to that which will sustain their survival in the environment, the environment is equally entitled not to be harmed under all circumstances, as far as possible. Inequalities which affect the environment need to be eradicated and this is discussed next.

2.2.2   Eradication of inequalities

The global community is comprised of economies that have become more integrated across geographical borders, through the trade of capital, services, commodities and technology – this is known as globalisation (Patel, 2015:15; Wilson, 2011:16). Since globalisation has a direct effect on economies and societies, it bears much significance to social work because it means that the profession can respond to the challenges related to the impact of globalisation on people, the environment and societies.

Neoliberalism is the predominant ideology which forms the basis for globalisation (Spolander, Engelbrecht, & Sansfaçon, 2016:303). Wilson (2011:16) states that the main ideas on neoliberalism include markets controlling socio-economic and political life, competition within the markets which encourages efficiency, the talents of a few that will benefit everyone and, eventually, capitalism rising to meet everyone's needs.

As a result of the global economic community following the neoliberalism ideology, environmental protection weakens and governments reduce their spending on social programmes (Wilson, 2011:16). Although globalisation has reduced poverty for some large countries having robust economic systems, global inequality is still a challenge which remains at high levels and continues to affect developing countries (Development indicators, 2018; Henderson & Hursh, 2011:171). The unequal balance between rich and poor countries has also worsened the climate crisis, which indirectly affects poorer nations who battle with flooding, malaria, inflation rates and various natural disasters (Wilson, 2011:18). The intertwining issue between the environment, human development and the economy has an unavoidable impact on society. In qualitative studies, children have made it clear that they

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too are keenly observing the negative impact of people and inequality on the environment and they feel that the environment needs to be taken better care of (Lombard & Viviers, 2015: 81; Manyena, Fordham & Collins, 2008: 305).

In opposing the neoliberal concept and its effects, authors have agreed that the disadvantages of globalisation are outweighing the benefits thereof. In support of the former, Henderson and Hursh (2011:171) and Wilson (2011:19) remark that the global population's economic, social and environmental state has suffered long enough, while the markets have done little to reduce global warming, or encourage the shift towards zero-carbon economies that are needed. Henderson and Hursh (2011:175) explain that neoliberal policies continue being unquestionably imposed on various struggling economic systems despite evidence through research that these neoliberal policies are increasing economic inequality. Also, social movements such as the Anti-Globalisation Movement, France's *Gilets Juanes*, and Solidarity Against Neoliberal Extremism are movements where civil society is taking a stand against neoliberal policies being implemented locally and/or globally, due the result that the neoliberal policies benefit the wealthy elite and continue to keep marginalised groups in social exclusion (Chrisafis, 2018; S.P., 2018; The Commonspace, 2018).

Wilson (2011:19) provides some positive insight about the neoliberal concept by explaining that the globalisation challenge can be conquered through the development of ecologically sustainable communities and fostering self-organising, developmental systems. In the face of governments' weakening power to effectively protect their societies and the environment from the disadvantages of globalisation, civil society organisations have been hard at work to start and maintain movements to address various socio-political issues (Besthorn, 2013:59; Wilson, 2011:19). With such movements and smaller communities coming together to promote gender equality, social justice, the fair distribution of economy and protection and sustainability of natural resources, communities can reach a place of being able to overcome the negative effects of globalisation.

One of the other challenges with globalisation and modern, Westernised culture is that societies become consumed with the aim to exist only for human interest and human welfare, while environmental justice advocates for the environment to be considered as having its own intrinsic value (able to be valuable irrespective of human involvement, and able to exist for itself and co-exist with living creatures) (Besthorn, 2013:56; Dominelli, 2012:3; Miller, Hayward & Shaw, 2012:271).

Government systems throughout the world are often at fault for encouraging poverty, remaining unmoved by their citizens' sufferings and failing to take a stand against the

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materialistic goals pursued by industrial tycoons in financial sectors of society (Dominelli, 2012:4). Dominelli (2012:4) states furthermore that government systems are failing to assist communities to focus on the creation of sustainable environments for people, animals and plant life, in a developmental manner. For a concept like environmental justice to become a more effective tool in the profession, neoliberal capitalist frameworks need to be challenged because they undergird how people relate to the economy, political structures, and the environment (Henderson & Hursh, 2011).

There needs to be a shift from the neoliberal, capitalist paradigm, which is supporting industrialised societies, to a paradigm which recognises the impact of injustice towards the environment and marginalised peoples (Miller et al., 2012:270). It implies a shift in focus from observing people in their environment to seeing both people and environment as equally important.

2.2.3   Broadening the person-in-environment paradigm

The social work profession has always been in favour of the dual focus between the person and the social environment, known as the person-in-environment approach (PIE approach) (Norton, 2012:299). The profession has also been criticised for excluding the natural environment in the PIE approach by continuing to see the social and natural environment as two separate entities (Norton, 2012:299-300). To contribute to social justice, one of the significant paradigm shifts which the profession needs to make is to shift its approach to include the natural environment alongside people, and this is how the person-and-environment approach becomes more relevant (Besthorn, 2012:248-249).

Based on the history of the person-in-environment approach, social work has been functioning from a 'systemic approach', focussing on the important social systems which form an important part of people's functioning. The profession has benefited much from this approach because it has assisted social work practice in understanding that there are various individual, collective and cultural processes which influence individual behaviour and thoughts (Norton, 2012:300). Later, this approach was challenged because there was a lack of focus on the natural environment. After the approach was challenged, the ecosystems paradigm was introduced, which focusses on the interaction between people and the natural environment.

The ecosystems paradigm still needs to be taken further, because if social justice is taken into consideration, merely considering the natural environment is not a complete paradigm shift. Dominelli (2012:6) explains that, firstly and indeed, this expanded paradigm should

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include respect towards the Earth's resources and the interdependence between people and the natural environment. Secondly, the paradigm should be broadened to consider the structural inequalities and industrialism which impacts on the equitable share of and protection towards natural resources. Therefore, the ultimate goal should be having a person-and-environment (PAE) approach, instead of the person-*in*-environment approach.

The social work profession is beginning to take cognisance of the notion that the physical environment is important for people's well-being and therefore needs to be considered with more mindfulness than before. Besthorn (2012:248-249) asserts that people are neither superior to the natural environment nor separate from it in some special way. Therefore, since people are an element of the environment, there needs to be recognition of society's interdependence to the natural environment and communities' responsibility to and within it.

By extending the social environment to the natural environment (the biopsychosocial sphere) social work can have a broader perspective with which to view people's well-being (Besthorn, 2012: 249). By acknowledging the natural environment social work puts itself in a position to avoid breaching its commitment to social justice (Besthorn, 2012:250, 254).

2.3   SOCIAL WORK AND PROMOTING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

The social work profession has been implored by various social work scholars to start taking action against ecological awareness and environmental issues affecting society (Besthorn, 2012:249; Borrell, Lane & Fraser, 2010:316). More advocacy has been done over the years through social work scholars to encourage the profession to consider the realities of the impact of environmental crises on social welfare, and the impact that human behaviour has on the natural environment. Besthorn (2012:250) emphasises that the profession's lack of participation in critical environmental issues displays not only harm to the very communities that the profession aims to serve, but also displays a breach in its commitment to social justice. The following discussion considers the various roles that social work can play regarding environmental justice.

2.4   SOCIAL WORK AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Human development is affected negatively by various global problems, and to support positive human development the UN has developed seventeen SDGs. To achieve the seventeen SDGs, a paradigm shift is needed in the social work profession: from being only psycho-social minded to becoming more aware of the ecological orientation. An ecological approach is interdisciplinary and hence social work is one of various professions that need to

continue learning about the environmental impact of human activities (Peeters, 2012:294). The interdisciplinary approach is also a holistic approach to human development as is discussed below under 'Green social work', the theoretical framework for the study (see 2.6).

Social work needs good practice models that can be beneficial in doing two things: encouraging positive human development and promoting environmental justice. The social development model can be one of the practice models effective to do so. Social development is about empowering people to improve their well-being and circumstances on both a macro- and a micro-level, by integrating social and economic policies to benefit society as a whole (Midgley, 1995:12; Midgley & Conley, 2010:11-12). Elliott (2011:103) affirms social development as a relevant model for social work to empower people who experience exclusion and oppression (which is what people experience through environmental injustice). Pulla (2013:266) exemplifies this idea by stating that social workers can work on micro- and meso-levels with communities so that people develop new attitudes, begin communal green projects (gardens, farms, etc.), engage in positive environmental activism, and fight against bad political structures that obstruct environmental justice. Communities face human and environmental challenges such as food insecurity, shortage of resources and environmental degradation, so social work can benefit from using social development to tackle two issues at the same time: encourage better human development while also encouraging people to change their attitude and behaviour towards the environment (Pulla, 2013:265-266).

Since social development is such a relevant model to improve human development, social workers should consider in what ways this model can benefit them in advocating for environmental justice. For instance, Peeters (2012:294) states that social workers can influence and empower communities to change their attitude and behaviour towards the environment, build social capital and encourage the development of social entrepreneurship.

2.5 SOCIAL WORKERS' ROLES IN PROMITING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

The Global Agenda (2012) specifies a variety of roles which social workers have agreed to take up in collaboration with other organisations in taking an active position in upholding environmental justice. Social workers have various functions through which they can exercise their roles. These roles can be categorised into broad themes, namely social work and education and research, social work and economic issues, grassroots social work, reflective social work, activist social work and entrepreneurial social work.

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2.5.1   Social work education and research

With the commitment in upholding environmental justice, social work can begin taking up its role in promoting environmental justice by being one of the change agents to re-define justice through research, learning, teaching and asking questions about social work and environmental justice. For example, social work should change the fundamental meaning behind justice, by challenging the anthropocentric basis and neoliberal thinking which currently supports justice and begin raising awareness about the interlinked notion of social and environmental justice (Besthorn, 2013:40; Hardy, 2016). Social work can be a significant catalyst in encouraging and initiating research, conversations, and scholarly debate on social work and environmental justice (Besthorn, 2013:40).

If one looks at the theoretical basis of the systemic approach and the eco-systems theory, the term 'environment' has generally meant that the environment serves the needs of humans, which makes these approaches human-centred and thus objectifying the environment (Miller et al., 2012:272; Jones, 2010:69; Kemp, 2011:1200; McKinnon, 2008:256). In contrast, 'environment' needs to be given a new definition for these approaches. Instead of viewing the environment as the space within which human needs are fulfilled, it should be defined as the space within which the well-being of people and the environment is linked in complementary and complex ways (Miller et al., 2012:270; Jones, 2010:72; Shaw, 2011:6). This is part of the paradigm shift that is needed for the profession, and it will help to create an academic and practice space through which social workers can promote social and environmental justice. Furthermore, since the social, physical, economic, cultural, economic and political spheres of society have an intricate interdependence, social work can uphold people's and the environment's well-being by working according to an integrated approach (Patel, 2015:10; Dominelli, 2012:8; McKinnon, 2008:264).

Evidently, social work's role involves sparking new thought processes around environmental justice. Besthorn (2014:17) explains that social workers can apply more critical thinking when it comes to the environment, the economy and people's well-being. Social work should question socio-economic events and socio-cultural trends which encourage product creation and consumption that is detrimental to natural and human society (Dominelli, 2012:25). Being inquisitive about such happenings will encourage social workers to analyse news reports to identify possible roles for them towards social change and environmental justice.

Together with critical thinking and inquisition, Dominelli (2012:2-3) encourages the notion of social work students being educated about environmental justice in higher education institutions. Environmental justice needs to become part of social work's theoretical basis

and mode of practice, since achieving social justice will not be complete without adhering to the values and principles regarding environmental justice (Besthorn, 2012:33; Jones, 2010:68; Rambaree, 2013:263; Shaw, 2011:25). Moreover, research on environmental justice and social work should be conducted, and projects and field placements for students should be encouraged in promoting environmental justice and green social work. Altogether, these educational and research activities will support the gradual paradigm shift towards better promotion of environmental justice (Dominelli, 2012:2-3), which is the intended outcome of this study.

Bexell, Rechkemmer, Decker-Sparks, and Tejada (2018:6) conducted a study which indicated that there is an insufficient amount of research and scholarly literature from the social work profession regarding sustainability issues and environmental degradation. Their study concluded that less than one percent of social work research consists of themes focussing on sustainability and environmental issues, and that social work researchers are at times impeded to publish research about environment-related topics due to interdisciplinary research challenges, barriers within research institutions, publisher bias, and some social work research journals considering 'the environment' as not being scholarly enough to publish research about (Bexell et al., 2018:6). Some positives which were highlighted in the afore-mentioned study are also that qualitative social work studies and scholarly interdisciplinary work about the environment are making significant academic inroads for the profession, and that undergraduate social work students are encouraged to select environmental topics for their postgraduate studies (Bexell et al., 2018:7). There continues to be great potential within social work research for environmental justice.

Hawkins (2011:69) explains that environmental and social rights should be incorporated into social work education, so that social workers can be prepared for advocating and playing active roles in the move towards achieving environmental justice. Jones (2018:559) reiterates this notion, also stating that social work education needs to move beyond the traditional 'person-in-environment' understanding and better align itself towards environmental topics by fundamentally reviewing current curricula. Mwansa (2011:370) argues that it is necessary to create curricula and modes of practice that are relevant to the local context, and that social work educators should use paradigms which can address local and relevant social and environmental issues. What this study aimed to explore was what social workers in the South African NGO context understand about the concept of environmental justice and their role in promoting it for sustainable communities. This study also serves as a way of addressing a gap in research regarding environmental justice from the South African context and as such, will build the local knowledge that is lacking in South

African studies. Therefore, it is envisaged that the results of the study will contribute to achieve what Mwansa (2011:370) encourages social work to accomplish: indigenous knowledge that can support curricula (in the South African context) and a way of informing local practice.

In conclusion, the role of social work in education and research involves social workers being inquisitive, applying critical thinking, creating paradigm shifts, affecting social work curricula and practice modes, and being willing to learn about social work and environmental justice. Since environmental justice involves socio-economic factors such as financial markets, governance, and structural inequalities, social work has a role to play in economic issues.

2.5.2   Economic issues and social work

At the Social Work, Education and Social Development Conference, which took place in Seoul, North Korea in 2016, Silvana Martinez, stated that social work is about dealing with power and politics that create the inequalities faced by society (Hardy, 2016). Ian Hyslop, a lecturer from the University of Auckland, at the same conference, stated that social workers need to challenge neoliberal governments because such governments teach their own people that it is not the government that is at fault for the challenges that they face, but rather the people themselves (Hardy, 2016). It is precisely in such situations where social workers can fight for environmental justice by speaking out against neoliberal decision-making and propaganda that takes advantage of the natural and physical environment at people's and eco-systems' expense and compromising sustainable development.

Dylan (2013:82) and Dominelli (2012:25) expect social workers to question the world's consumption patterns and production methods which exploit people and natural environments through policy debate. In other words, debating the nexus between the economy, society and the environment, and how the power of structures and governments can influence the vulnerability of the environment and the poor. Green social work integrates the interconnection between people and the various environments (socio-economic, cultural and natural), based on notions of justice, so that structural inequality and the unequal distribution of resources and power can be addressed (Dominelli, 2012:8). The intended result is to protect people and the environment, while enhancing the well-being of all. This practice framework would be quite beneficial to social work, especially because part of social work's commitment to the 2030 Agenda through the Global Agenda, involves being a positive influence in achieving economic equality and environmental justice (Global Agenda,

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2012; Shaw, 2011:26). Social work can also take up the role of being involved with communities at a grassroots level to achieve environmental justice.

2.5.3 Grassroots social work

Part of social work's contribution to sustainable human development includes its role in disasters and interventions that relate to social, environmental and economic development. Social work can provide support to communities experiencing disasters by using resilient and self-help models that will maintain community sustainability during times of disasters (Dominelli, 2012:4). By using skills such as networking and brokering, social workers can assist communities to create natural environments that would be more sustainable for people, plants and animals. Social and environmental justice would be promoted because natural resources would be shared fairly while respecting the limited available natural resources.

Social work can also assist communities by helping them to begin and continue a variety of projects and programmes to eliminate poverty, such as vegetable gardens, a clothing line accessible and affordable to the poor or dance clubs funded by corporate organisations (Dominelli, 2012:25). Within such activities, social work can promote environmental justice by encouraging communities to use natural resources in such a way that sustainability is upheld (Borrell et al., 2010:316; Dominelli, 2012:25). Borrell et al. (2010:326) present an example of the 'Kildonan UnitingCare' programme in which social work participated among other disciplines to help communities use energy in a socially, financially and environmentally beneficial manner. Inspiration from the 'Kildonan UnitingCare' programme can be taken and social workers can use advocacy, networking and micro-skills to consider programmes that can empower people socially, financially, politically, and environmentally. Thus, by social work applying its skills towards the vulnerable, environmental justice can be promoted.

Social work can also play a role towards environmental justice on a grassroots level by engaging corporate companies to practice social responsibility in partnership with other organisations with the aim of helping communities' own economies by utilising their strengths and abilities (Berzin, 2012:186-187; Germak & Singh, 2010:88; Lombard & Strydom, 2011:336). Whether it is on a meso-level (families or groups in a community) or on a macro-level (an entire community of people), communities use their abilities to bounce back from a bad season in the economy or environmental disaster which forms part of community resilience.

Community resilience is an emerging field in social work and can be defined as the capacity of communities to adapt and maintain well-being dynamically, in the face of change and adversity - socially, economically or ecologically (Osofsky & Osofsky, 2018:116; Madsen & O-Mullen, 2016:279). This definition of resilience is better suited for understanding communities because it gives more allowance to how dynamic communities can be and individuals and groups in communities must work together to positively adapt to natural and economic disasters.

Resilience has several characteristics, namely the use of social, economic and ecological capitals, leadership, social networks and diversity (Madsen & O'Mullen, 2016:280; Rodin, 2014:14). Rodin's (2014:14) resilience framework includes diversity, one of the attributes of resilience, and this means that community members have a variety of resources available which they can use when they are facing disasters. To be resilient, communities should have a variety of sources to help them during times of disaster. After a disaster like a flood strikes, an informal settlement community, for example, should be able to access an interdisciplinary system and a resource list which provide guidance where to find the required assistance.

Developmental social work emphasises participation and therefore social workers should include community members, including children, in planning for and recovering from disasters (Rogge, 2000:50-51). Social workers can play a leading role to advocate for opportunities and a platform where community members can decide for themselves on their own model framework for preparing for disasters, whether the disaster is human-made or natural (Patterson, Weil & Patel, 2010:127-141).

In conclusion, social workers' role in promoting environmental justice implies strengthening communities' resilience by utilising their strengths and enabling them to participate in decisions affecting them and the community while caring for the natural environment. In this way, social work will contribute to promoting sustainable communities as the current generation will ensure that resources are preserved for future generations. Social workers' can sharpen their awareness in promoting environmental justice through reflective practice.

2.5.4   Reflective social work

Reflective social work refers to social work practice whereby social workers looks back at their practice and thoughts and considers what they have learnt so that they may apply their new thoughts to tomorrow's practice (Knott, 2016:11). Reflective social work involves critical thinking, using a variety of sources of knowledge, applying curiosity and creativity to what is

being learnt, being able to create theories and having a rationale for behaviour (Knott, 2016:11).

The definition of Knott (2016:14) coincides well with Besthorn's (2014:17) encouraging social workers to be more reflective about social work's role towards sustainability, environmental awareness and the dynamics between society, the natural world and the economy. Furthermore, social workers' role in building community resilience, social capital, strong, beneficial social networks and encouraging sustainable human and ecological development can be more efficient if social workers can be more curious about the natural world, be more contemplative about what is happening to the world and learn to be more connected by fostering relationships that can build society and the natural world (Besthorn, 2014:17-19; Ingram, Fenton, Hodson & Jindal-Snape, 2014:3). An example of reflective practice is where creativity, innovation and critical thinking were applied by social work students from the University Of Georgia School Of Social Work and a local organisation to develop a useful framework for assisting the victims of the Hurricane Katrina disaster, as well as any future natural or human-made disaster (Bliss & Meehan, 2008:83).

2.5.5   Activist social work

Social workers have the knowledge and skills to practice advocacy with and for communities facing disasters. Through advocacy, change can be facilitated that hold governance structures accountable to communities and the environment (Dominelli, 2014a:143; Green, 2012:26; Haynes, 2012:275). Social work can participate in natural and human-made disaster awareness-raising activities and provide people with the information regarding which stakeholders in society to turn to for disaster relief (Ali, Hatta & Azman, 2014:40). Furthermore, social work can use advocacy to encourage government structures to work together with communities to create infrastructure and facilities, so that recovery from and preparation for disasters is easier (Peter, Hazell & Hess, 2010:403). Disaster-risk management needs a multi-pronged approach and should involve schools, government and the community – all of which are prime positions where social workers can connect different parts of society for better support in disaster management (Ali, Hatta & Hazman, 2014:40).

In South Africa, shack fires are rife and difficult to curb. According to 2018 statistics listed by the Fire Protection Association of South Africa, most fires in informal settlements occur due to undetermined, open flames, and the impact on informal settlements is negative due to the close proximity of the structures and materials used to build the structures (Informal settlement fires, 2018). Using this as a practical example, social workers working within government structures can liaise with community leaders and schools to be pro-active

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towards creating projects and infrastructure that can survive shack fires. They can help with raising-awareness about fires and prevention measures, in a similar style that the City of Cape Town provides fire safety awareness campaigns since 2012 (Luhanga, 2012).

Advocacy should include actions to influence policies that promote sustainable development through integrating social and economic development by taking the environment into account. Social entrepreneurship is a strategy that social workers can take up to this end. They can start by challenging the myth that the social work profession does not and should not involve itself with business and also, social workers should keep being involved in programmes which boost social and economic development and sustainable human and natural development (Germak & Singh, 2010:80; Lombard, 2008:123, 133, 137). Ali et al. (2014:41) write that social workers can be influenced by international policies regarding disasters' impact on people. Having stated this, social workers can also use their position to influence policy by commenting and participating in discussions and policy formulations regarding disaster management and preparation.

2.5.6   Social entrepreneurship and social work

Berzin (2012:186) indicates how social work is aligned to social entrepreneurship, which is the use of a business strategy to meet a social need in society. Since the social work scholars are giving more acknowledgement to the inextricable link between environmental, social and economic aspects in society (Dominelli & Ku, 2017:7-8; Hawkins, 2011:74), social entrepreneurship can be an avenue to engage in eradicating socio-economic inequality in a sustainable way to promote environmental and social justice. Germak and Singh (2010:80, 81) indicate that most social workers working in NGOs need to incorporate more social entrepreneurship as a creative solution to meeting social needs. Social entrepreneurship can assist in funding NGOs while rendering social services and development programmes to communities.

Social entrepreneurship can be deliberately facilitated by social workers if they are well engaged in the communities that they work in, since there are many social needs that social workers can attend to using social entrepreneurship. For example, the company *Brownies and downieS,* is a social entrepreneurial project that serves two purposes: to run as a business-oriented coffee shop, while also providing on-the-job training for people with disabilities (Ressel, 2018; Brownies & downieS – About Us, 2015). The company has become a success for being able to make a positive and lasting social impact in society by helping people with special needs to get jobs and prevent them from being marginalised from society, while also being able to thrive well as a business.

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Another example of a social entrepreneurial business which has made positive inroads in the commercial sector is *Balambie*, a type of baby cot which can be assembled effortlessly, is constructed with corrugated carton, and is affordable. The owner of the concept, Marié Janse van Rensburg, developed the product with the intention of providing mothers of new-born babies (living in low-income homes) with an affordable product where the mothers can place their babies when it is sleep time, rather than placing the babies on the floor or squeezing the baby between themselves as parents, which is quite unsafe (Ressel, 2018).

Social workers can consider such examples of social entrepreneurship and develop innovative projects or programmes that can make a social impact, while supporting environmental justice. A social worker may identify a need for children in impoverished communities to be able to play with toys and recycle paper from office companies, and develop a project of using recycled paper for Paper-Mache projects for the children to use for playing with. Another consideration can be for social workers to create networks between toy companies and impoverished schools, so that teachers can recycle old toys and make them into new toys for children, while making it a business. Although these are just ideas, these types of initiatives are beneficial in several ways. Not only would these kind of initiatives meet social needs (providing developing children with toys for play and learning), but it would also provide social workers with the opportunities to be advocates, networkers, brokers, consultants and researchers for environmental justice, and with social workers' partnership with individuals/communities these initiatives would be able to meet a significant economic and environmental need as well (reducing litter and respecting natural spaces, while earning an income to support a livelihood).

In conclusion, social work can fulfil several roles in promoting environmental justice (Dominelli, 2012:25). Social work has a role to play in the development of research and interventions, challenging people's understanding of their relationships with one another and the natural environment, participating in projects and programmes aimed at eliminating poverty, and encouraging the sustainable use of natural resources in such a way that there is enough for people and for natural ecosystems (Dylan, 2013:82; Bauwens & Naturale, 2017:99). The theoretical framework of the study was selected against this background.

2.6   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework of this study is green social work (Dominelli, 2012). Green social work is the practice of social work making use of interventions that will address inequalities which occur on structural, social, economic and political levels (Dominelli, 2012:8; Philip & Reisch, 2015:477-478; Noble, 2016:17). Green social work advocates against structures

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which unfairly and unethically exploit human and natural resources, while social and environmental welfare suffers unduly (Dominelli, 2012:25; Noble, 2016:17). Green social work incorporates a developmental approach which is embedded in a human rights-based approach and socio-economic development (Patel, 2015) in promoting a more equal society.

Natural and human-made disasters negatively impact on people's livelihood and worsen the existing social-economic, political and cultural inequalities (Dominelli, 2014b:338; Noble, 2016:13). Poorer communities are impacted the most, with political and economic structures exacerbating the marginalisation that impoverished people experience (Dominelli, 2014b:339; Noble, 2016:14). Society's industrialisation processes have failed to provide all people with equal distribution of natural resources (Dominelli, 2014b:339) which highlights the role of social work in fighting social and environmental injustice and upholding human rights.

By utilising people's strengths, developmental social work practice aims to bring about social change which can improve social and economic development (Patel, 2015:127). In using this approach, social work practice focusses on the dynamic between people and their environment (economic, social or natural), while remembering that different levels of intervention are necessary to assist people (Patel, 2015:127). This means that social workers have a focus on the service user system and the environment (natural and social) and the different levels of intervention in order to surmount barriers that keep people from experiencing a healthy sense of well-being, (Patel, 2015:127; Department of Social Development, 2013).

The developmental approach embraces the need in sustainable development to use socio-economic models that promote environmental justice. One way of achieving socio-economic development that takes care of the environment, is through mobilisation and advocacy (Dominelli, 2014b:339). Multinational companies and political structures need to be held accountable so that they are kept from exploiting people and natural resources, because without accountability, marginalised people continue experiencing unequal welfare and natural resources are used unsustainably (Dominelli, 2014b:339). Noble (2016:16) explains that the green social work model, enables social workers to be proactive rather than reactive, which aligns social work practice from an ecological perspective.

Green social work utilises the capabilities and strengths approaches. The capabilities approach stems from the notion that people should be able to use the environment enjoyably, valuably, meaningfully, sustainably and in a fulfilling manner (Nussbaum, 2011:18-19). The capabilities approach also means that people should have the freedom to

use, or not to use, the environment in a fair manner while doing activities which are valuable not only for themselves, but for the environment itself (Hartley, 2015:138). Complementary to this, the strengths approach encourages the use of people's strengths and natural assets so that environmental justice can be a reality and a socio-economic system can be developed successfully (Dominelli, 2012: 27; Patel, 2015:147). Social work, as a profession, can employ these approaches through micro-, meso- and macro-level practice (Patel, 2015:127; Department of Social Development, 2013).

As indicated above, green social work is a development approach as both are anchored in a human rights-based approach. Androff (2016:27) defines human rights as rights which belong to all people because all people are human beings, and this approach is significant to environmental justice because people have the autonomous, free right to sustainably and responsibly use the environment, while caring for it fairly (Androff, 2016:27).

The advantage to using the human rights approach to support a notion such as environmental justice is that it bolster's the social work profession's efforts to conduct social work practice that develops and empowers people positively and uphold human rights, which is an ethical requirement of social work (Ife, 2012:6; Department of Social Development, 2013). In turn, a human rights-based approach embraces anti-oppressive practice which benefit the environmental justice paradigm because an anti-oppressive approach advocates against discrimination and superiority over others. The anti-oppressive approach encourages social and economic inclusion of those that are marginalised so that they can benefit from social and environmental welfare (Huegler & Lyons, 2011:37; Philip & Reisch, 2015:478; Rambaree, 2013:271).

In summary, green social work provides a platform to incorporate environmental justice into social work practice. Green social work incorporates a human rights-based approach and anti-oppressive practices, utilises capabilities and strength-based approaches, and is in essence a developmental approach that advocates for ecological justice for all.

2.7   SUMMARY

The literature review presented the nineteen global problems which people and the natural environment face and how the problems are interlinked. Inequality and the marginalisation of vulnerable groups are on the rise and the global society continues to battle with challenges which are human-made and natural. Social work can play a critical role in bringing about positive change against these global problems and one of the ways in which this can be done is through advocating for environmental justice.

The social work profession has needed to expand its understanding of the connection between the natural environment and people. Social work scholars such as Dominelli (2014a:133) and Hawkins (2010:74) have successfully been able to present a relevant definition of environmental justice, which encompasses human and natural co-existence and the shared rights between people and the natural environment. Aspects such as structural and political inequality, social justice, and the broadening of the PIE paradigm have become paramount to social work practice, theory, and education.

The body of the literature review took on a deeper examination into what environmental justice means in relation to social justice and ecological justice, neoliberalism, and the PIE paradigm, where social work scholars indicated that social justice is incomplete without environmental justice. Neoliberalism continues to be the undergirding of today's capitalistic societies, and industrialisation persists in overlooking the injustice facing the environment and marginalised peoples. Social work's advocacy of environmental justice would be an effective tool to challenge structural inequalities and bridge the gap between the respect of both human and environmental rights. Additionally, although the social work profession has previously been lacking in participation, there is a growing level of involvement in terms of research, education, and programmes being carried out to show the profession's earnestness in advocating for environmental justice. A positive trait to social work's involvement in environmental justice is that this paradigm shift allows social work to approach human development more holistically, to make more use of interdisciplinary work, and to consider the environment as a priority and with sustainability in mind, instead of keeping people at the centre of ecosystems.

The roles which social workers can take up in advocating for environmental justice included social workers being trained to advocate for environmental justice through education and research, and social work challenging neoliberalism in terms of economic issues facing the global community. Social work can encourage the use of community resilience, developmental social work, social capital, PIE paradigm, and the strengths' perspective to work with communities on a grassroots level so that the environments' rights are maintained. Reflective and activist social work are significant roles for social workers, considering their practice methods and actively advocating against marginalisation towards vulnerable groups and the environment. Lastly, social entrepreneurship presents an opportunity for social workers to encourage people to challenge their understanding of the environment and use projects which can eliminate poverty while preserving natural resources.

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The theoretical framework provided a focus into green social work, which was befitted for this research study, as green social work incorporates the developmental approach, strengths' perspective, capabilities' approach, human-rights based approach, and anti-oppressive approach. With a thorough groundwork laid through the literature review and theoretical framework, the following chapter presents the results on social workers' understanding of their role in promoting environmental justice.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, EMPIRICAL STUDY AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

3.1 INITRODUCTION

In this chapter, the research methodology, empirical study and findings are discussed. The research study was guided by the following research question:

What is the role of social workers in promoting environmental justice for sustainable communities?

The sub-research questions were as follows:

- What are social workers' understanding of environmental justice?
- What activities and interventions are social workers engaged in that address environmental justice issues?
- How do social workers contribute to sustainable communities?
- What strategies do social workers propose in promoting environmental justice for sustainable communities?

3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

The researcher used a qualitative research approach, because it allows the researcher to collect data that represents the in-depth views of participants (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:91). For this study, the researcher obtained in-depth information on how social workers view their role in promoting environmental justice for sustainable communities.

This study utilised interpretivism as a research paradigm, which focusses on the understanding of social workers' experiences in practice and in the case of this study, the meaning that they give to the role of social work in promoting environmental justice (Rubin & Babbie, 2013:55). As characterised by interpretivism, the researcher first obtained more knowledge about the topic and proceeded to interview the participants using questions which were based on literature findings (Nieuwenhuis, 2016a:62).

The purpose of the study was both explorative and descriptive. Fouché and De Vos (2011:96) state that exploratory and descriptive research could be used together effectively, where the descriptive purpose assists in answering the sub-question of the proposed research on how social work can contribute to environmental justice for sustainable communities. Babbie (2011:67) explains that exploratory research provides a better

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understanding of a phenomenon. The researcher gains insight into a specific phenomenon and answers the "what" question (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:95). In this instance, the researcher explored the meanings that social workers attribute to their roles as promoters of environmental justice (Creswell, 2014:185). A descriptive focus, on the other hand, refers to the researcher obtaining specific details about a situation and therefore the focus is on the "how" and "why" questions (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:96). Thus, the descriptive goal of the study answered the question regarding why it is necessary for social workers to be involved in environmental justice practice. Furthermore, to describe how they engage, or could engage, in environmental issues and how they contribute, or can contribute, to sustainable communities.

3.3 TYPE OF RESEARCH

Basic and applied research are complementary to one another in that basic research strives to formulate new theory or refine existing theory and, in this way, extends the knowledge base, whereas applied research aims to bring about change for a practical problem (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:94). Basic research strives to formulate new theory or refine existing theory and, in this way extends the knowledge base, and applied research presents a new solution for a practical problem (Fouché & De Vos, 2011:94). This research study was both applied and basic research. The research was basic because the researcher aimed to recommend new roles for social workers, and in this way contribute to the knowledge-base of green social work. Regarding the applied component of the research, social workers can use these recommended roles to promote environmental justice, and in doing so contribute to more sustainable communities.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

Leedy and Ormrod (2013:141) explain that a case study as a research design could be suitable for learning more about a situation which is not clearly described or understood and that the case study chosen by the researcher must consist of specific qualities to inform practice for similar situations. Creswell (2013:98) affirms that a case study entails the research of cases with specific characteristics and within certain boundaries, and adds that current, real-life cases should be studied to gather accurate data.

In this study, participants were purposefully selected to explore their understanding of environmental justice, to explore and describe activities and interventions of social workers when they address environmental issues, and to determine their contribution to sustainable communities. Through the exploration of social workers' current views and practice in terms

of environmental justice, the researcher aimed to propose specifically formulated roles that social workers could integrate to promote sustainable communities.

The specific case study was an instrumental case study. Rule and John (2011:8) explain that instrumental case studies attempt to explain specific cases, test existing knowledge and generate new information. Fouché and Schurink (2011:321) add that this type of case study can be very useful to inform policy development through the generation of new theory and knowledge. Therefore, when the researcher recommends specific roles for social workers to promote environmental justice, it can influence the development of new policies for more sustainable social work practice.

Leedy and Ormond (2013:141) warn that case studies could not necessarily be generalised to all practice settings. The advantage of conducting a case study is that an in-depth understanding of the case is being acquired (Creswell, 2013:98) which will leave the researcher with rich information. In addition, Nieuwenhuis (2016b:75) states that case study research is essential in assisting the researcher to understand the dynamics of a specific situation.

3.5   SAMPLING AND SAMPLING METHOD

The study population includes the total units with which the research problem is concerned (Strydom, 2011a:223). In the case of this study, it included all the social workers working in non-governmental organisations in Tshwane, Gauteng Province. However, it was not possible to include all the registered social workers practising in these non-governmental organisations in the research study.

Non-probability sampling was used as a sampling approach since the total size of the population was not known to the researcher and hence there was no random selection of participants (Maree & Pietersen, 2016:197). In selecting the sample, the researcher made use of purposive sampling, meaning that the researcher had to decide which elements are important enough to serve the interests of the study (Strydom, 2011:232).

The NGOs which were included to participate in this study include the following:

- Tshwane Leadership Foundation (TLF) (assists women, men, and children experiencing poverty, suffering from HIV/AIDS, and who are involved in commercial sex work)
- Kamcare (provides care and development opportunities to youth and communities)

- Carenet (works with youth and vulnerable children)
- SA Cares (an organisation assisting abandoned babies and families in poverty)
- Kings Hope Foundation (an organisation rendering a variety of community development services to families and community members)
- The Salvation Army (an organisation providing community care and developmental activities to communities)

Flick (2007:80) indicates that the sample cases should be able to reflect and verbalise their experiences and be available for the duration of an interview. The following criteria were used in purposively selecting the participants who were willing to participate in the study:

- Social workers with at least one year of social work practice experience.
- Social workers who were willing to conduct the interview in English.
- Social workers who engage in community activities and interventions that promote social and/or economic development.
- Social workers who are engaged in, and/or interested in environmental issues, activities and interventions in relation to social work.

Clarke et al. (2015:229) explain that a sample depends on practical considerations and the theoretical approach and that for a master's study, six (6) to 15 participants would suffice for a sample. The sample initially included 10 participants, with at least one social worker per organisation. The researcher telephonically contacted the directors of the organisations to explore their willingness to participate in the study and requested written permission to conduct the research with their social workers. The researcher requested the directors to assist her to get access to the sample framework to inquire their willingness to participate in the study (see Appendices A-E). The sampling criteria and the researcher's contact details were provided to the directors. The directors recruited social workers who were interested to participate in the study. The contact details of the interested social workers were provided to the researcher by the directors.

However, the two participants from Kings Hope Foundation which had at first agreed to participate in the study later became unavailable to be interviewed. The researcher attempted making alternative appointments a few times and struggled to contact the social workers and this lagged the study's progress. The two participants ultimately withdrew their participation from the study.

Additionally, one participant from Tshwane Leadership Foundation was not available to meet the researcher in person for an interview, however agreed to proceed with an e-mailed

interview. In the end, instead of having ten social workers as participants, the researcher resolved to continue conducting the study with the initial eight social workers which had agreed to be research participants. The number was sufficient as data saturation was already observed by the fourth interview.

The research participants completed consent forms and the interviews were conducted at a convenient and private place as agreed with the participants.

3.6   DATA COLLECTION METHOD

Data was collected through one-on-one semi-structured interviews and an interview schedule was used to guide the researcher (see Appendix F). Pre-determined open-ended questions were asked and the researcher was attentive to the participants' responses, so that she could probe and clarify for further information (Nieuwenhuis, 2016b:93). The literature study was used as a framework to formulate relevant and focussed questions. The interview questions were shared with each participant before the interview to help them contextualise the interview and provide relevant information during the actual interview (Greeff, 2011:352). The interview schedule did not have pre-determined themes, but included the following aspects:

- Participants' view on social workers' activities and interventions in environmental justice
- Participants' view on social workers' role in social and economic activities and interventions, and
- Suggestions regarding the roles of social workers in promoting environmental justice.

Preliminary contact was established to introduce the study and make logistical arrangements for interviews. Hereafter, at the start of each interview, the researcher ensured that the participants understood the informed consent form (see Appendix G), and had up to 60 minutes for the interview (Flick, 2007:78; Greeff, 2011:353). In two interviews the researcher negotiated for additional time to obtain further information.

The researcher was able to make a few notes during the interview, while also using an electronic recorder with the participants' permission, which was later utilised for accurate transcription for data analysis. (Flick, 2007:82).

The advantages of using interviewing as a data collection method is that the researcher obtains rich, descriptive data, has the opportunity to view social reality through the participant's lens, and allows the researcher to use open questions that can be further explored (Greeff, 2011:342; Nieuwenhuis, 2016:93). However, a few disadvantages of interviewing include having to maintain control of a distractive participant (not focusing on the topic), the need for good rapport, and having an unsuccessful interview due to the lack of maintaining balance and flexibility at the same time (Greeff, 2011:349; Nieuwenhuis, 2016:93). In the interviews, the researcher was flexible enough to allow the participants to share their story, and was also able to obtain information that was later used for comparison between the different case studies.

3.7   DATA ANALYSIS

Analysing data, according to Wagner, Kawilich and Garner (2012:229), refers to the process of making sense of data through various ways. This means tasks such as reducing and displaying data and then making conclusions or verifications. It corresponds with Schurink, Fouché and De Vos (2011:397) when stating that qualitative data analysis is about reducing raw data volume and identifying significant patterns.

In the study, the researcher made use of the six steps of thematic analysis as suggested by Creswell (2014:197-220) and Clarke et al. (2015:230-245).

In step 1, the researcher organised and prepared the data for analysis. The researcher transcribed interviews by writing the exact words of the participants from the audio recording. She also wrote field notes of what transpired during the interviewing of the participants in their different settings and kept the notes in corresponding files, to be utilised later for organising the data.

Step 2 involved reading and rereading of transcripts, listening to the audio recording and looking at all the data. This was done with the aim of checking general ideas by the participants, the tone of their ideas and the depth of the information. The researcher also recorded general thoughts about data on the margins of the transcripts.

In step 3, the researcher coded all the data by writing a word representing a category in the margins of the transcripts. The researcher identified patterns in the data and grouped the patterns together into similar data segments.

Step 4 included using the coding process to generate a description of participants with the aim to search for themes. The researcher used the coding to generate themes or categories for the proposed study. The themes have been used as headings and/or subheadings which stand as the major findings of the study. These displayed the multiple perspectives from the participants about their role in promoting environmental justice for sustainable communities. Quotes were used from the transcripts to support the themes.

Step 5 involved writing and presenting themes of each participant through conveying descriptive information about each participant. Themes and subthemes and any other information such as the biographic data of participants were presented in a tabular format.

In step 6 the researcher conducted data evaluation and interpret the findings. The researcher checked how useful the data was in addressing the questions being explored and how the data linked to the role of social work in promoting environmental justice for sustainable communities. Finally, the data was packaged into a text to narrate the findings. The findings of the study were submitted to the University of Pretoria by means of this research report and will be submitted to a scientific journal for publication.

3.8   TRUSTWORHINESS OF DATA

According to Lietz and Zayas (2010:191), a trustworthy study represents an accurate portrayal of the views of the research participants and not that of the researcher. A study conducted in the absence of trustworthiness and accuracy, can merely be viewed as a good emotional story (Carey & Asbury, 2012:21). Due to its impact on resource allocation and policy change, these authors indicate that research must be credible and have rigour and requires that the study should interpret the phenomena as reported by the participants.

For this study, the researcher has evaluated the study by considering the four concepts that are integrated to achieve trustworthiness (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:191).

- **Credibility**

According to Krefting (1991:215), "true value or credibility is obtained from the discovery of human experience as it is lived and perceived by informants". The study must have true value or credibility so that the researcher is able to establish with confidence that the study has indeed faithfully recorded the phenomenon under study (Shelton, 2004:64). Furthermore, Lietz and Zayas (2010:191) also refer to credibility as a degree to which the researcher will ensure that the findings are reported in such a way that the participants can

be able to identify their contributions in the study. In other words, true value is established when the information gathered by the researcher truly reflects the perceptions and views of the participants rather than those of the researcher. In this study the researcher has achieved this by ensuring that during transcription and field notes every piece of data have been presented as reported by the participants.

- **Transferability**

According to Lietz and Zayas (2010:195), "transferability and fittingness is achieved when the findings of the research have applicability to another setting, theory, to practice or future research". To establish transferability, the research details were described in depth to allow the reader to evaluate the extent to which the conclusions drawn could be transferable to other settings, times, situations or people (Amankwaa, 2016:20). Detailed information has also been provided on how the research has unfolded, with a clear outline of the step-by-step processes followed in the research to allow for transferability. Amankwaa (2016:20) views this as the researcher telling a story or painting a clear picture to the reader.

- **Auditability**

The third criterion for evaluating trustworthiness of research is to ensure that the study is auditable. Lietz and Zayas (2010:195) define auditability as the degree to which the research procedure is documented in such way that another person can be able to follow and critique the research process. The researcher has ensured auditability by recording every step throughout the research process. The researcher created a file which included a detailed account of each research meeting from sending informed consent forms to the time the participants signed informed consent forms. The researcher also consulted with her research supervisor and other colleagues who are experienced in qualitative methodology and who has conducted a similar study and shared the research decisions and procedure in order to ensure that she was still on the right track in terms of the study.

- **Confirmability**

According to Shelton (2004:72), confirmability or neutrality is defined as "the qualitative researcher's comparable concern to objectivity in research". Confirmability eliminates the chances of researcher bias to influence the research findings and allowing the participants to express their own views, perceptions and understanding of the phenomenon at hand. Confirmability can be achieved by applying one or more methods of triangulation to the research (Shelton, 2004:72). Triangulation refers to "the combination of two or more

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theories, data sources, methods or investigators on one study of a single contrast and can be employed both in qualitative and quantitative studies" (Yeasmin & Rahman, 2012:154). For this study, the researcher triangulated data from participants' perspectives from different NGOs.

The researcher should spend enough time with a participant to obtain additional data through the process of prolonged engagement (Lietz, Langer & Furman, 2006:453), and once the participants reiterate similar ideas and do not provide new data, the researcher reaches data saturation. This also means it is not required to recruit more participants. The researcher spent up to 60 minutes for interviewing the participants and where it was necessary, asked for the permission of the participants for no longer than additional 30 minutes to conclude the interview.

Through the process of reflexivity, the researcher needs to be aware of researcher biases which may be caused by personal experiences, background knowledge, perceptions and interest in the research (Lietz & Zayas, 2010:192). This means that the researcher must remain aware of his/her influence throughout the research processes. It is important to make use of opportunities such as peer scrutiny of the research by colleagues and supervisory guidance from the research supervisor throughout the course of the research (Shelton, 2004:67). The researcher spoke to her fellow researchers throughout the process to obtain objective support and guidance throughout the research process, and the researcher's supervisor helped her in making informed decisions that were not based on bias, but on what was required for the study.

Throughout the research process, the researcher focussed on the new knowledge being obtained about the topic, which assisted in her remaining open-minded and neutral about the study. Conducting data collection with organisations which the researcher was not personally or professionally familiar with was beneficial for the study because she had no source of bias or conflict of interest which would influence the study's progress. After each interview, the researcher reflected on the interview and considered any possible bias or perceptions which could have influenced the data collection process.

3.9   PILOT STUDY

Before conducting the main study, the researcher conducted a pilot study (Strydom & Delport, 2011:394). The aim of a pilot study was to ensure that the research methodology chosen would be appropriate and, most importantly, to determine whether the semi-structured interview schedule would produce responses that would answer the questions

posed in the main study. According to Bless, Higson-Smith and Kagee (2006:184) a pilot study is "a small study conducted prior to the main research to determine whether the methodology, sampling, instruments and analysis are adequate and appropriate". Yin (2014:96) points out that the purpose of a pilot study is to refine the data collection method and clarify the research design.

The pilot study highlights the feasibility of the research and brings possible deficiencies to the attention of the researcher. This is of particular interest, as it allows the researcher to adjust the research instrument in order to make it more effective in gathering the required data (Bless et al., 2006:184). The interview schedule was piloted with the first two participants of the main study and no clarification of the questions or aspects of the research process was required. The findings are included in the main study. According to Ismail, Kinchin and Edwards (2018:6) in qualitative studies, data corruption is less of a concern and as a result, researchers can use some or all their pilot data as part of the main study.

3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations, according to Flick (2009:54), are formulated to regulate the relation of between the researcher and participants. Major and Savin-Baden (2010:53-54) explain that this is due to the relationship between the researcher and the participant which constantly negotiated to deconstruct power, achieve and maintain trust, promote equality and ensure reciprocity. Therefore, it is important for the researcher to show how she took the ethical aspects into considerations for this study.

- **Informed consent**

Before the collection of data, Flick (2009:59) cautious that it is important that the researcher is competent enough to explain to the potential participants on the goal of research study. He adds that, the information should be adequately explained to ensure that they could decide on whether to voluntarily participate in the study or not. For example, the researcher should not use language that would convey different interpretations to the objective of the research study.

In addition to this, Babbie (2013:32) states that participation in a research study disrupts the participants' regular activities. Therefore, it is important that the participation is voluntary where they fully comprehend what the research aims to attain and how it would be of benefit to them. Apart from explaining in person to the potential participants about the research

study, Babbie (2013:34) explains that there is need that a consent form be signed by the participants, which outlines the goal and some of the objectives of the research study.

The researcher explained in detail on the actual day of the scheduled interview on what the study entails. The researcher also emphasised to the participants that participation in the study was voluntary and if they felt uncomfortable or for any reason did not want to take part in the study, they could inform her. The informed consent form also explained the use of certain tools such as voice recorders, and the justification and assurance that the information would be kept confidential. The informed consent form was comprehensive and easy to read and understand. The participants were informed that the findings were going to be presented in a research report and possible publication, and that the data would be stored at the University of Pretoria for 15 years. If the data were to be used again, it would only be for research purposes as indicated in the informed consent letter.

- **Confidentiality**

The social work community is relatively small and many social workers in the Tshwane urban area know each other. It was impossible to guarantee anonymity, but data gathered was reported with confidentiality in mind (Braun & Clarke, 2013:64).

Israel and Hay (2009:21) in Creswell (2009:120) emphasises that it is the obligation of the researcher to protect their research participants, develop a trust relationship with them, promote the integrity of research and guard against misconduct and impropriety that could reflect on the University and identified the NGOs where the social workers are employed. The researcher informed the participants, through the informed consent letter, that the information would be shared only between the researcher and the supervisor. Furthermore, pseudo names were used to protect participants' identity.

In addition to this, the researcher kept all the research data at a safe place where only she had access to.

- **Voluntary participation**

All participants were informed beforehand about what the interview would entail and that it is voluntary to take part in the proposed study (Strydom, 2011b:116). They were also informed through the informed consent form that they did not have to answer a question if they wished not to do so. Furthermore, they could also withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. Two participants from Kings Hope Foundation informed the researcher that

they wished to withdraw their participation from the study. They withdrew their participation from the study due to their inability to keep the interview appointments with the researcher, despite attempts to re-schedule.

- **Actions and competence of researcher**

The researcher made sure to act in a professional manner by being on time for the interviews, being well-organised and respecting different cultural opinions (Strydom, 2011b:123). According to Strydom (2011b:123), researchers are obliged to have adequate skills to undertake the research study and constantly be aware of his/her ethical responsibility. This includes being constantly aware of the social work code of ethics. The researcher completed a research methodology module as part of the programme. Furthermore, the researcher has experience in conducting professional interviews and the study was undertaken under the supervision of an experienced research supervisor.

- **Avoidance of harm and debriefing**

From practice experience the researcher is aware that not all organisations render services according to a social development framework or promoting environmental justice, in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2015). This could be due to numerous factors. It could be that the social workers that are being interviewed as participants could be confronted with questions that trigger feelings of incompetence (Strydom, 2011b:115). It was therefore the researcher's obligation to inform the participants beforehand that the research topic is not personal, but one that aims to explore on little that is known and to make social workers active in the promotion of environmental justice. This was also addressed in the informed consent form.

After data collection, it is important that the researcher have a reflective process with each participant to work through their experiences (Strydom, 2011b:122). After the interviews, the researcher briefly spoke to the participants to listen to their comments and enquiries about the study, and allowed them to reflect on their experience. The researcher also encouraged them to contact the researcher's supervisor, or the director of the organisation to help clarify any uncertainties that may have aroused after the interview (Strydom, 2011b:122).

- **Publication of findings**

Bless et al. (2006:146) indicate that the participants would want to use the research findings to inform their own practice and policies. The researcher was committed to report all findings

in an honest way and give full recognition to social work colleagues for their contributions to the research study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013:108).

Creswell (2003:67), as cited in Strydom (2011b:126), states that the information must be formulated and conveyed clearly and not lead to any misinterpretation of meaning by participants and other readers. The research findings are disseminated through this research report and submitted to the University of Pretoria. Findings will also be prepared for submission to a scientific journal for possible publication. Bless et al. (2006:146) observe that publication credit should be given to all persons who have contributed to the research study, either in the form of authorship or acknowledgement.

The following section presents the biographical details of the participants and the research findings.

3.11 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study included participants from NGOs in Tshwane in Gauteng Province. Therefore, the findings of the study cannot be generalised to all practice settings.

As indicated in section 3.5 above, the researcher intended to sample 10 participants from six NGOs. However, two participants from one of the participating NGOs withdrew their participation. In addition, one participant could not meet the researcher in person and consequently the interview was conducted via e-mail. The researcher was mindful that the richness of the data could have been influenced. However, this limitation has been mitigated by reaching saturation of data by the fourth interview (see section 3.5).

3.12 RESEARCH FINDINGS

The research findings of the study will be presented and discussed in this section. The biographical information of the participants will first be presented, followed by the themes and subthemes that emerged from the study.

3.12.1 Biographical information of participants

The biographical information of the participants is presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3. 1: Biographical information of participants

Participants	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Male	Female	Female	Female	Female
Age-group	30–35	41–46	53+	30–35	47–52	36–40	30–35	30–35
Tertiary qualification	BSW	MSW	MSW	BSW	BSW	BSW	BSW	BSW
Years in social work practice	11+ years	11+ years	11+ years	4 – 6 years	7 – 10 years	1 – 3 years	1 – 3 years	1 – 3 years
Geographical area of work	Urban and semi-urban	Rural	Semi-urban	Semi-urban	Urban	Urban	Urban	Urban

Of the eight participants who participated in the study, only one was a male and the remaining seven participants were female. This finding is in line with the profile of the social work profession. In terms of age, four participants were between 30 – 35 years old; one participant was in the age category of 36 – 40 years; one participant was within the 41 – 46 year age group, and another one was within the 47 – 52 age group. Only one participant was older than 53 years (Clarke et al., 2015:230-245). Two participants have a master's degree in social work, while the remaining six participants' highest qualification is a Bachelor's degree in Social Work.

Regarding the number of years of practice, three of the participants have been practicing social work for more than eleven years and one participant has been practicing respectively for 7 – 10 years and for 4 – 6 years. The outstanding participants have been practising social work for 2 or 3 years.

Four of the participants practice in urban areas, one participant practices in semi-urban and urban areas, two participants render services in only semi-urban areas, while one participant provides social work services to a rural community.

3.12.2 Themes and sub-themes

Seven themes emerged from the data. In this section the themes will be discussed and substantiated by the direct quotations of the participants. Where relevant, findings will be verified with literature. The themes and sub-themes are summarised in Table 3.2.

Table 3. 2: Table of themes and sub-themes

Theme	Sub-theme
1. Conceptualising environmental justice	
2. Factors influencing environmental injustice	2.1. Environmental factors 2.2. Socio-economic factors
3. Target groups affected by environmental injustice	
4. Factors which influence community and environmental sustainability	4.1. Lack of social capital 4.2. Hopelessness about the future 4.3. Poor health care and lack of access to medical facilities 4.4. The lack of municipal services 4.5. The lack of social services 4.6. Inconsideration towards the natural environment 4.7. People's need for survival
5. Projects that promote environmental justice and community sustainability	5.1. Environmental projects 5.2. Social projects
6. Partnerships for promoting environmental justice and community sustainability	
7. Social work roles promoting environmental justice and community sustainability	7.1. The role of an educator 7.2. The role of a researcher 7.3. The role of an advocate 7.4. The role of a facilitator 7.5. The role of a mobiliser

Theme 1: Conceptualising environmental justice

For many participants, conceptualising environmental justice was not easy. The term carried different meanings for different participants, ranging from not knowing what it means to linking it to the natural setting (plants and living organisms), while others defined it in relation to people's impact on the environment.

Some participants expressed quite simply that they did not know what environmental justice means, while others related it to the broader context of 'environment':

P2: "*I don't know what environmental injustices are, things in the environment that's not giving justice to the community members staying there…*"

P7: "*What do you mean? I don't know, for me environment is anything, it's crime out there, racism …*"

P4: "*Environment is complex, [it] affects your economy, your physical being…environment is the space around me…*"

A few participants conceptualised environmental justice as wrong-doing to the natural setting, thus emphasising the injustice done by humans to the natural environment.

> P1:   *"Something that's not right in the environment."*

> P2:   *"We do wrong to [the] environment, we just do whatever we want to it…wrongs we do to the environment…"*

The findings corroborate with authors' views (Besthorn, 2013:36; Zapf, 2010:35) about an anthropocentric culture which objectifies the natural environment for the purpose of human pursuits. Zapf (2010:36) points out that the natural environment is vulnerable to people's materialistic culture and the lack of civic advocacy towards the natural environment's rights. Miller et al. (2012:270) explain that, since the long-standing paradigm of the natural environment involves being at the centre of anthropocentric culture, a more ecological paradigm needs to be adopted, encompassing the impact of environmental injustices on people and the natural environment. Gray and Coates (2012:240) show concurrence by stating that social work's initial anthropocentric paradigm of 'environment' has been theoretically expanded to include the natural environment, a significant move away from the individualistic framework of person-in-environment (PIE). Some participants expressed their views that natural disasters, human-made disasters, pollution, and poverty as some of the examples of what they perceived as environmental injustices.

> P1:   "*And with the fire now that went through [Plastic View]… and the natural disasters like the rains over the last weekend affected them as well. That's, that's not man-made…it's difficult to look after a child as is if you are, if you don't have money for milk or nappies or you don't have electricity, you don't have a place to stay…But one of the big contributing factors is extreme weather conditions.*"

> P4:   *"…if I just burn this plastic, if I just do this, nobody will say anything, the environment isn't going to say anything to me. The wrongs that we do to the environment. Ja. It's what comes in my mind... too much litter…lot of sewerage…just dispose anything anytime…"*

The participants' views are in line with what Drolet, Wu, Taylor and Dennehy (2015:528) describe as social, economic, and environmental challenges (such as degraded natural spaces, poverty, and changing climate) being faced globally, and that although environmental justice still needs more attention in social work literature, the social work

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profession is advantageously positioned to address these challenges. Gray and Coates (2012:239) aver that social work's role is well-positioned to notice and take action on the poverty that the marginalised face, especially since the poor may do injustice to the natural environment (e.g. burning wood, over-farming) to survive.

As evident in the following quote, injustice towards the environment, cannot be seen in isolation from social injustice where people are struggling for survival.

> P2: "*…the poorer they are, the less they look after the environment…they look after their basic needs, that's just survival…*"

The co-existence between humans, animals and living organisms and how they affect one another was expressed by some participants. While various arguments have been made for the equal significance of human and non-human environments, Gray and Coates (2012:241) argue that social work must integrate the two concepts by preserving the natural environment's welfare for human survival while also protecting the natural environment because humans, animals and living organisms live together in one large important eco-system that cannot be sustained without the natural environment. Schlosberg (2013:44) states that when people negatively impact on the natural system, the more vulnerable people and ecological systems become, which is why the co-existence between people and the natural environment needs to be protected. This co-existence starts with an understanding of the natural environment by being exposed to it as evident in the following quotes:

> P1: "[*People*] *lack exposure to the natural environment, [they have] no understanding of worth of natural environment, natural environment is not important.*"

> P4: "*[It is] wrongs that we do to the environment, how they affect the living organisms in that area, we are not even aware of that they co-exist with us, normally we don't care about these things, how can you kill off this tree, oxygen and carbon, it's supposed to be an eco-system.*"

Participants' views regarding the complementary existence between plants, people, and animals are consistent with Dominelli's (2012:6) approach about the necessity of a balanced link between society and the natural environment. Dominelli (2013:431) explains that environmental justice involves sharing the advantages and disadvantages of preserving a good and sustainable social and natural environment for all, humans and natural participants

alike. Additionally, environmental justice refers to fighting against structural inequalities which disadvantage the marginalised and the natural environment, while benefiting a privileged minority, with the aim of using people's capabilities and resilience towards a sustainable environment for people and natural species alike (Dominelli, 2013:435; Drolet et al., 2015:531). This definition encompasses all the important aspects of environmental justice, in particular which are relevant for this study.

Theme 2: **Factors influencing environmental injustice**

Participants indicated that environmental factors, including littering, tree culling and water wastage, social factors, such as unemployment, lack of education and domestic violence contribute towards environmental injustice. These two factors are discussed next as sub-themes.

Sub-theme 2.1: Environmental factors

Participants mentioned a variety of factors in the natural environment they have observed, which they attribute to environmental injustice. The factors which the participants specifically made mention of were littering, the killing of animals, varying types of pollution, culling of trees, water wastage, and poor care for natural spaces in the community, which participants articulated as follows:

> P2: *"I don't know why, people are not looking after their yards, there is always papers and food and stuff lying around, throw their water just out of their doors…"*

> P4: *"…animals end up drinking the water that comes from sewerages… cutting down of trees, we cut off the trees a lot…People kill those things, our frogs. I feel those things they were not brought here by us. They are part of the environment. And we don't know [that] when we kill them, how does that affect the environment?"*

> P1: *"…air pollution, noise pollution, no hygiene …"*

Participants also noticed how people did not care about the balance between people and their natural settings, and that people did not think it was important to think about the natural setting in their daily lives.

P1: "*[There's] no understanding of worth of natural environment, natural environment is not important.*"

P4: "*…wrongs that we do to the environment, how [the wrongdoings] affect the living organisms in that area, we are not even aware of that they co-exist with us, normally we don't care about these things…*"

The participants' views are consistent with Pulla's (2013:265) reference to how communities are challenged by environmental degradation due to environmental injustice. Dominelli (2012:6) asserts that both the vulnerable poor and the natural environment become neglected as humans continue living in structural and economic inequalities. This means that as society continues to be economically and socially unequal, the most vulnerable groups in communities and the natural environment face the various environmental factors which the participants listed. Cushing, Morello-Frosch, Wander and Pastor (2015:194) highlight the equality/sustainability hypothesis, that unequal and impoverished societies are more likely to pollute or degrade their environments. Studies have also found that unequal societies have higher levels of air pollution, less access to safe water and sanitation, and water pollution which influences aquatic life (Cushing et al., 2015:202).

As income distribution becomes more unequal, the result is increased levels of poverty and environmental degradation (such as biodiversity loss, less access to clean drinking water, and the use of natural resources to the point of exhaustion) (Serrano, Sobreiro & Neto, 2015:37; Barbier, 2015:251). Also, communities which are socio-economically disadvantaged have fewer trees and plants, and less of a variety of plant species, while socio-economically advantaged communities can afford more trees to plant, have space for street trees, and have plants which survive for several years without being cut down (Shanahan, Lin, Gaston, Bush, & Fuller, 2014:15).

Sub-theme 2.2: Socio-economic factors

Societies which have an equal distribution of income experience better population health (Cooper, McCausland & Theodossiou, 2013:942; Pickett & Wilkinson, 2009:493). In contrast, populations which are economically unequal experience more social problems, such as crime, teenage pregnancy, social status differentiation, and health problems (Pickett & Wilkinson, 2009:509; Dominelli, 2012:31). Some of the main socio-economic factors which participants elaborated on include economic and social inequalities which are taking place in communities, such as unemployment, lack of education, no electricity, overcrowding in informal settlements, health hazards, desperation, alcohol abuse, crime, breakdown of social

capital, teenage pregnancy, domestic violence, poor service delivery, food insecurity, and poverty. Participants voiced these realities as follows:

P2:   "*…[the people] stay in shacks, environment is not conducive for a child to stay in…people [are] fighting and drinking, [they] drink a lot, beating each other, lack of education…*"

P6:   "*Lack of access to quality health care, lack of access to adequate and safe housing, homelessness, loss of employment, breakdown of family and social networks, health issues, no municipal services, a [non-]working sewage system, very unsafe, unhygienic, inhumane building where 100's of people are currently living…*"

The findings support literature which states that economic inequality impacts negatively on a population's health and social cohesion, and instead contributes to social mistrust, racism, high stress levels, and mortality (Pickett & Wilkinson, 2009:509; Cushing et al., 2015:194; Cooper et al., 2013:942). Furthermore, the findings are also consistent with scholars' research regarding how the socio-economic inequalities in South Africa continue to remain high and various challenges continue to hamper social cohesion and development, such as crime, corruption, spatial exclusion, class divisions and social fragmentation (Davids & Gouws, 2013:1202). Webster and Francis (2019:3) explain that an integrated approach would be needed to address poverty and socio-economic inequalities. The integrated approach, according to Webster and Francis (2019:3) would include improved social protection, developing people's capabilities, increasing the level of employment to address structural and power imbalances in communities, and strategies that can improve economic growth constructively. Furthermore, once economic and institutional power is better understood, it would be easier to resolve problems surrounding structural and institutional exclusion and discrimination, so that socio-economic inequalities can be eradicated (Webster & Francis, 2019:3). Dominelli (2012:25) states that there needs to be a response from the social work field which can address the need for a fair relationship between the natural, social, and economic environments in society, and encourage socio-political and economic structures to protect marginalised people and the natural environment. This would ensure that socio-economic equalities will aid in protecting and preserving the balance between the natural environment, people, and the economy, and thus the need for an integrated approach at tackling socio-economic inequalities.

Theme 3: Target groups affected by environmental injustice

Participants affirmed that specific groups of people in society are more vulnerable than others in being negatively affected by environmental injustice. These groups include children, the elderly, and people who are ill.

P1:   "…*the children that we work with normally come out of more the poorer areas and poorer homes that are more prone to be affected by something like air pollution or noise pollution or traffic, gasses and whatever.*"

P2:   "*Well, definitely children, the elderly people, the sick people because they can't fend for themselves. They can't say enough is enough, I get up and I leave now and I go to another town or I make a decision, like the adult can do… But, most of the people who are staying here, they are poor.*"

Participants described their views about poor people, to show how their poverty intersects with social and environmental injustices:

P1:   "*In Plastic View air pollution, sanitation – big problem there... So there's no sanitation there, there's no running water, so it's a… it's the diseases that come out of there, it's bad. So if, if someone gets sick , they all get sick, because they all stay in such close proximity , and there's no hygiene. They don't bath. They don't… the streets are where the toilets are.*"

P5:   "*…the observations at the Struben Street Shelter and conversations with outreach workers...affirmed the growing number of street homeless people living with chronic psycho-social or mental health issues… Homelessness is caused by various factors ranging from economic, loss of employment, breakdown of family and social networks, to health issues.*"

A study conducted by Ogneva-Himmelberger and Huang (2015:165-174) confirmed that children, elderly people, and especially impoverished people are the most negatively affected vulnerable groups by environmental injustice. Empirical studies also provide evidence that suggests that environmental injustice means that socially vulnerable groups of society, such as the poor, are disproportionately exposed to environmental dangers and do not receive environmental protection through laws and state regulations (Higginbotham, Freeman, Connor & Albrecht, 2010:259; Grineski et al., 2015:145). Indeed, groups such as the elderly, children, and impoverished people are left socially and environmentally

vulnerable by facing environmental injustice (Poverty eradication, 2018; Dominelli, 2012:6). By describing children, the elderly, ill people and poor people, the participants spoke in concurrence with what is already stated in literature.

Various scholars (Higginbotham et al., 2010:259; Kelly-Reif & Wing, 2016:351; Grineski et al., 2015:145) explain that socio-cultural and political factors, such as lack of participation, place more risk on vulnerable groups and that vulnerable groups cannot obtain social and economic resources to prevent themselves from being exposed to social and environmental injustices. This means that children, the elderly, people who are ill, and impoverished people, are often not in the position to improve their social and economic circumstances to protect themselves from or prevent pollution, social ills, or unemployment. Also, without the opportunity to adequately participate against political structures, it is difficult for vulnerable groups to advocate for change for themselves and the environments that they live in.

One participant described her perspective about the impact of environmental injustice on animals in poor communities:

> P3: "*So, when we litter, some of the cows and goats, they end up eating plastic… the children, they are also affected, because they might catch some of the diseases through that dirty water they swim in.*"

What the participant expressed corroborates with findings of other studies. Roaming animals easily find litter and eat it, and solid waste which is poorly managed is often found by animals (dogs, cows) and consumed (Ramaswamy & Sharma, 2011:9; Perreault, Wraight, & Perreault, 2012:486; Baabereyir, 2009:147). This is dangerous and leads to animals dying or having digestion problems due to the plastic chemical substances becoming stuck in their intestines (Ramaswamy & Sharma, 2011:9). These research studies indicate that animals are vulnerable to environmental injustices such as litter and various kinds of pollution.

Women were also pointed out as part of vulnerable groups due to the domestic violence they face and that they can become economically and socially disadvantaged by leaving abusive relationships:

> P7: "*I would say women…it takes time for a woman to adapt and with that adaption comes so many things; maybe some had to leave their jobs because they're running from their environmental injustices, they're abused they have to leave, so that they can come and be safe so it really affects them a lot; mentally, socially, physically...*"

P8:"   *…we work with abused women…their living circumstances, mostly I can say their socio-economic status… they are unemployed … they stay longer in the abuse because… they are unemployed, if I leave this man, how am I going to survive, what is going to happen to my children who is going to feed them?"*

A study by Haeseler (2013:2) explains that women facing domestic violence face economic difficulties as they try to provide for themselves and their families. Also, poverty, changes to family structures, overcrowding in homes, unemployment, and inequality contribute to the domestic violence that women face (Goodrum, Felix, Self-Brown, Veanuuse-Brown & Armistead, 2019:128). At times women flee abusive relationships and are negatively affected sociologically by losing some social networks, economically because they lose a source of economic provision, and mentally due to the stress of fleeing and having to find ways to continue parenting their children (Haeseler, 2013:2). Thus, empirical studies corroborate with what the participants described.

Theme 4: Factors which influence community and environmental sustainability

The participants cited various factors which can influence community and environmental stability, namely the lack of social capital, hopelessness about the future, poor health care and lack of access to medical facilities, the lack of municipal services, the lack of social services, inconsideration towards the natural environment and people's need for survival. These factors are discussed as sub-themes below.

Sub-theme 4.1: Lack of social capital

Boyle (2011:85) explains that social capital refers to the values and dynamics which help to bring people together, such as generosity, trustworthiness, caring for each other, and showing sympathy for one another. Participants have described the loss of social capital through the breakdown of social networks and the instability of the family system:

P6:   "*… breakdown of family and social networks…*"

P7:   "*So it affects the well-being of the family, I will say it's where we get dysfunctional families or we'll get adults or young adults that are, they don't really believe families anymore. So they don't really believe in families anymore … it's where so many social ills are coming from, ja, because of dismantling, the stability of the family.*"

The participants recognised the lack of social capital, like poor social networks and unstable families, as part of the poverty which communities faced and thus a factor working against environmental and community sustainability. This impacts negatively on social capital in a community, because the breakdown of social capital means that personal trust and social norms are not built to a strong capacity and communities cannot reach mutual goals in response to bad circumstances (Leonard & Pelling, 2010:140).

Many participants explained that their services include assisting victims of intimate partner violence (or domestic violence), and domestic violence is related to low social capital and disadvantaged communities (Kirst, Lazgare, Zhang & O'Campo, 2015:315). Some participants described the poor status of communities where they find women or children in need of social services, and that the communities would be having low socio-economic status and lack of safety:

> P6: "…*we have drop in centres, [field work social workers] go out doing outreaches, and then they would identify the women, so it will be slums, it would be unhealthy, it would be dangerous, and then they would bring them here, where it is safe and they are cared for, and they're given necessary resources to live.*"

The risk of domestic violence is increased when factors such as low socio-economic status, the lack of social capital, high unemployment, high crime rates, and social disorder are present in a community, and women living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods are more likely to experience intimate partner violence (Kirst et al., 2015:316). Conversely, social capital is higher in communities having strong social networks and community participation, and with higher social capital comes more effective resistance against crime and victimisation, including intimate partner violence (Kirst et al., 2015:316). Participant P8 referred to the strength of unity regarding one of the communities they work with:

> P8: "*In terms of sustainability, you know, this community it's so united… They even formed forums, yes, so that they're able to assist each other with whatever it is that they need. Also with, like us here there are organisations that will call us that we've this and this and it's so much, can we please share with you, if we say yes, they will share with us. So I can say in terms of the community they are so united, they take care of each other.*"

This means social capital is significant for a community's sustainability, and without strong social capital, a community can fall into social disorder (Kirst et al., 2015:315). Seeing that

social capital involves varying levels of trust and reciprocity in different relationship types and social networks (e.g. family, friends, colleagues, neighbours, community members), communities with diverse social networks and strong social capital can build good civic organisations and coalitions; this is elementary for achieving community goals (Tamara, 2011:176). Strong social capital is important for building environmental justice movements, since people can advocate for their civil rights and the rights of the natural environment (Tamara, 2011:174). Thus, building positive social capital can be an important factor for building sustainable communities.

Sub-theme 4.2: Hopelessness about the future

Participants described what they have observed about impoverished clients: they prioritise survival over caring for the natural environment. This also means that they spend most of the time feeling desperate or hopeless about the future, because their main concern is their survival, rather than caring about saving water, stopping pollution, recycling for the good of the natural environment, or caring for the natural environment.

> P1: "*…easy to say think about the environment, we need to save water, we need to stop pollution, stuff like that. But if you are literally living day to day, you really can't care less about the environment, because you need to survive…*"

> P2: "*…the poorer they are, the less they look of the environment… maybe it has to do with Maslow and the hierarchy of needs, because they look after their basic needs, and they don't care about environments.*"

> P2: "*…because we asked those children, 'What's your vision for the future?' and they said, 'I want another child'. Another child said 'I want to become a drug lord because then I have money and power.' Like, that's not a future... I mean, they also worried about their survival…they don't look and care for whatever is around them…*"

> P4: "*…the community is not aware that they actually do injustice to the environment… 'I just want to survive today'…they don't pay for electricity…for water… they just waste water…Recycling [is] motivated by the short-term gains…they don't have this intention that 'We are cleaning the environment'. They only pick those that are recyclable, but if something's not recyclable to them, they just leave it there.*"

The participants' responses show that poverty can leave the impoverished and marginalised in a place of desperation. The responses concur with findings from a study by Zakirova and Zakus (2016:70) indicating that because of various socio-economic obstacles, poor people have feelings of despair and hopelessness, and not having their human rights fulfilled leaves them having little to no aspirations for themselves, let alone the natural environment. Their focus on surviving and staying alive becomes more important than preserving the environment. Studies indicate that impoverished children have low aspirations towards themselves, especially if their parents are in poverty or have received a low level of education (Babjáková, Džuka & Gresty, 2019: 331). This also means it can be unfeasible for them to consider having any aspirations for the natural environment.

The 2030 Agenda cites poverty as the first sustainable development goal, explaining that the impoverished are denied dignity (United Nations, 2015) and this also means that the desperation to survive overcomes any other need, such as protecting the environment. The balance between people and the natural environment becomes lost when the marginalised cannot go against the inequalities of power, affluence, and opportunities' (United Nations, 2015; Patel, 2015:5; Wilson, 2011:18).

Part of the hopelessness that the participants have observed in their clients stems from the inability that some clients experience in equally sharing economic and natural resources, which forms part of environmental injustice (Dominelli, 2014a:133). Also, as some societies are completely capable of preserving the natural environment, impoverished people who use natural resources to survive are not able to do the same, even though they may want to. People in poverty generally have a one-sided relationship with the natural environment, because their well-being, energy sources, access to clean water, food security, housing, and general well-being depends on the natural environment (Khatiwada, 2013:53). The 2030 Agenda states that by 2030, every citizen of the world should be able to enjoy a reasonable standard of living (UN, 2015). In this way, it will be easier for people to think about the future, and livelihoods that are aimed at having balanced economies that benefit the natural environment as well.

Sub-theme 4.3: Poor health care and lack of access to medical facilities

The participants described various challenges regarding health care which poor people face, including the lack of medical resources to help people in rural communities, poor waste management that poses health risk to community members, and the lack of access to quality health care.

P1:   "*Lack of resources…in the way of…medical help…in the more rural communities, it's difficult. There's no resources there.*"

P3:   "*Those are some of the common things in my community…the waste management is very bad…There's lots of health hazards…bacteria is invisible, and it is dangerous to our health…and this area is full of older persons that…are most affected, and the children.*"

P6:   "*Lack of access to quality health care… [facing] health issues…*"

Many participants explained that poor health care and the lack of access to medical facilities are factors that influence community and environmental sustainability negatively. Authors explain that environmental injustice impacts the impoverished disproportionately due to how they are exposed to pollution such as poor waste management and the effects of pollution on their health (cf. Wilson, Zhang, Jiang, Burwell, Rehr, Murray, Dalemarre & Naney, 2014:2; Harris, 2019:92; Kierans, Padilla-Altamira, Garcia-Garcia, Ibarra-Hernandez & Mercado, 2013:6). Furthermore, environmental injustice means that impoverished people cannot afford good quality of health care, and that the provision of government programmes, policies, and law enforcement is not adequately applied for them too (Harris, 2019:92; Kierans et al., 2013:5-6; Grineski & McDonald, 2011:378). Pollution and unsanitary conditions, impact negatively on the health of vulnerable groups, such as the poor, the youth, and elderly (Harris, 2019:104; Wilson et al., 2014:19). Additionally, the lack of access to health care and medical facilities puts vulnerable groups at a disadvantage for having good well-being. This forms part of environmental and social injustice (Harris, 2019:91; Wilson et al., 2014:19; Grineski & McDonald, 2011:378), and furthermore, has negative implications for community and environmental sustainability (Summer & Smith, 2014:718).

For instance, Harris' study (2019:106) indicates that vulnerable groups such as impoverished youth can only reach medical facilities for help once their symptoms of illness are severe, which places their lives at risk, and access to pharmacies is limited in contrast to areas less impoverished. Wilson et al. (2014:9) found in their study that people of colour and in poverty are more likely to have insufficient access to health professionals, and more likely to be residing where the environment has been degraded due to power plants and pollution by factories.

Harris (2019:108) and Summers and Smith (2014:726) emphasise that it is salient to improve social and environmental interventions, to curb social and environmental injustice, so that overall human development (school achievement, health status, and labour market

prospects) can improve and communities and the natural environment can be sustained for future generations.

Sub-theme 4.4: The lack of municipal services

Most of the participants described a variety of municipal services that were lacking in their communities, which contributed to the environmental injustice taking place in their communities. Aspects such as the lack of access to clean water, sanitation amenities, inadequately functioning sewage systems, derelict buildings and a lack of infrastructure such as clinics, were some of the services which the participants described.

> P1: "*No running water…toilets in the street…*"

> P2: "*Unsafe water, only one municipal tap, four taps for the 3 500 people staying there…they don't have electricity…don't have toilets, temporary toilets, excluded from a lot of services, lack of water…*"

> P6: "*…no municipal services, [no] working sewage system, very unsafe, unhygienic, inhumane building where 100s of people are currently living.*"

> P7: "*…[in the community] we don't have infrastructure, don't have clinics…*"

The findings correlate with findings of other researchers on environmental injustices and power structures who do not provide required infrastructure. Willett (2015:558) explains that environmental degradation is experienced most acutely by marginalised groups in society, and that structural inequalities tend to result in various environmental problems in a society. Runfola and Hankins (2009:348) and Kramer (2012:195) articulate specifically that when environments within a community are derelict, it can be due to power-holding institutions, or a diverse framework of local and regional political structures, whose decision-making has elevated a minority over the needful majority in a community.

Kubanza and Simatele (2016:867) present another perspective, that local governments manage their institutional capabilities inadequately when it comes to solid waste management, and the poor in communities face the negative impact thereof. Inadequate urban planning and policies can result in unhealthy living conditions for poor communities, and the lack of socio-economic services becomes aggravated, such as inadequate housing, poor access to clean water, and unhygienic sanitary facilities (Kubanza & Simatele, 2016:867; Kramer, 2012:195; Zhuang, 2010:13). This correlates with the participants' observations of what their communities are facing. Also, the small participation towards local

or national government that poor communities are afforded regarding their social and natural environments, and the unequal access they have to positive benefits which government makes, perpetuates injustices that they are already exposed to (Kramer, 2012:198; Willet, 2015:559).

Some sub-Saharan Africa cities and First World countries have not always succeeded in reducing poverty and providing adequate and sustainable basic municipal services (Kubanza & Simatele, 2016:868). Various African governments have presented technological innovations and neoliberal modernisation as the encouraged solution for alleviating poverty and improved municipal services, however, in terms of municipal management, environmental justice and sustainability has not yet been made a part of the solution (Kubanza & Simatele, 2016:868; Kramer, 2012:202). For instance, solid waste management must take into consideration the environmental and social impact that can be felt by communities, especially since poor solid waste management has a negative impact on air pollution, clean water access for people, and soil contamination (Fragkou, Roca, Espluga & Gabarell, 2014:732). This means that poor communities tend to be left behind as governments pursue improved economic standards for their countries, while not working towards improving basic municipal services. This also means that environmental injustice continues to affect the poor and vulnerable groups, and that social and environmental sustainability also remains threatened.

Sub-theme 4.5: The lack of social services

Carneiro, Galasso and Ginja (2018:173) describe social services to include housing conditions, employment, community members' ability to sustain a livelihood and access to social welfare assistance (such as access to social workers). Findings indicate housing, space and unemployment as problem areas which they need support with.

> P1: "*…no money, no home, unemployment…no space, overcrowding, no educational stimulation, teenage pregnancy…*"

> P2: "*…the other peoples they stayed very close to each other actually on top of each other …that environment is not conducive for a child to stay in… I've been there… in the community, in a house when the people were fighting and it was so loud. I can just imagine being a child in that house people are fighting and drinking, they drink a lot … and beating each other…the child is in the middle, so that condition is for me is really bad.*"

In line with the study's findings, Benedict and Forae (2011:296) specify that the impoverished tend to be concentrated in parts of the community where there are scarce social services, the people reside in informal settlements, and the homes are overcrowded. In developing countries, where structural inequalities are higher than in developed countries, governments are not able to address all the various needs within society, such as poverty, joblessness, and disempowerment, and social work services and resources are often scant (Willett, 2015:561). This means that several people in society cannot be assisted to overcome poverty-related issues and are forced to be resilient having very little to no resources to survive on. The findings concur with the explanation by Khan, Rehman and Abrar-ul-Haq (2015:93) that poverty includes the lack of shelter, the lack of access to social services, not having a job, powerlessness and lack of representation and power.

Kaka (2013:81) presents another perspective, that poor governance, due to corruption and fraud, contributes to various services being drained in society, and can also result in social services not being provided adequately for vulnerable groups like women and children. Families in sub-Saharan Africa are becoming smaller, due to socio-economic changes in the region, and this results in smaller numbers of family members being able to cope with various stressors that a family unit can be faced with, such as illness, unemployment, and financial stress (Mokomane, 2013:249). Benedict and Forae (2011:299) posit that there are several theories that can explain the root cause of poverty in a society, whether it may be due to individuals' lack of agency (Individual Attribute Theory), the lack of healthy capitalism in a society (Capitalist Entrepreneurial Theory), or due to the political structures which perpetuate poverty through policies and corruption (Power Theory). Whichever cause may be the root of a society's poverty, it remains essential for structural entities and the community to forge a developmental and sustainable framework of solutions, so that the whole community can enjoy employment, better living standards, and a natural environment which future generations can still enjoy and care for (Benedict & Forae, 2011:302; Harris, 2019:108; Summers & Smith, 2014:726).

Cash transfers are among one of many forms of social protection the South African government provides to vulnerable groups in their societies. However, they are not sufficient in ensuring that poverty is reduced, and basic social services such as health care, education, and water and sanitation are important for providing well-rounded social protection (Mokomane, 2013:255). Access to and adequate availability of health care, education,

housing solutions, sanitation amenities, and employment were confirmed through various studies as vital to a community's ability to sustain itself (Carneiro et al., 2018:173; Benedict & Forae, 2011:302), which further supports what Mokomane (2013:255) states.

Sub-theme 4.6: Inconsideration towards the natural environment

Findings indicate the impact of poverty and material needs on the natural environment. One of the participants' perceptions suggests that impoverished people in her community do not consider the importance of the local park's natural preservation and aesthetic and rather focus on means to obtain an income.

> P1: "*The fact that there's a tree and there's a river and there's grass, who cares? 'I need food. I need money and I need somewhere to stay and bottom line'. And that's that.*"

Additionally, participant P4 explained that theft is a challenge faced by his community. The specification was that the theft was targeted at park features (watering taps, benches/chairs, signs, and dustbins) which are meant to encourage people to recreationally spend time in the natural environment and preserve the park's natural aesthetic. The participant perceives that material needs can be prioritised over concern about the natural environment, as from his experience, destitute community members focus more on their material needs than environmental concerns.

> P4: "*…And again, like… they steal just about anything….at parks there are these taps to sprinkle water there…all those chairs where you can sit at the park, they just vandalise those things, and even the signs…that indicate 'Do not litter'…I've realised that…People just remove them [dustbins at the park] and recycle them to the scrapyards.*"

Showing concern and consideration towards the natural environment is complex and differs according to various settings (Hunter, Strife & Twine, 2010:528). Previous studies suggest that people in less developed areas can perceive environmental concern through a material lens, only seeing an environmental problem once environmental conditions are poor. Depending on a society's geographic and cultural context, a society may view material wealth as a larger priority than environmental preservation, especially if the society has historically been deprived of food, livelihoods, and empowerment (Hunter et al., 2010:528). In a study conducted in Nepal, researchers found that residents already facing material deprivation perceived that their hardships had increased due to new facilities in their

neighbourhood which were degrading the natural environment (Hunter et al., 2010:528). This shows that environmental concern emanating from people in less developed areas varies according to different contexts and can be influenced by local and national environmental activities and discourses.

The perceptions vary and this confirms Hunter et al.'s (2010:538) findings about the varying perceptions that people in lower socio-economic status may have about environmental concerns. Hunter's findings coincide with another study which focussed on the youth's views about environmental stewardship in a small rural coastal Canadian community (Hood, Martin, Mclaren & Jackson, 2011:538). The context of the youth in Hood et al.'s study was that their community had scarce meaningful employment opportunities since the decline of the local fishery industry, and the medical and social services were poor (Hood et al., 2011:617). Also, the community's population underwent regular decline as emigration towards urban places took place (Hood et al., 2011:617). The youth expressed a great love and appreciation for the natural environment surrounding them, however were disengaged towards taking essential action to protect it or care for it, due to the lack of political engagement with the community, the poor socio-economic circumstances, and the high level of emigration taking place (Hood et al., 2011:617).

In the below quote, the participant's views indicate that impoverished people can seemingly be inconsiderate towards the natural environment, and this overlaps with their need for survival:

P1: *"Because if you go into a community, where they are really struggling…kids, adults, young adults are really struggling, don't have a place to stay, have this heap of problems and you come in and tell them 'Be kind to the environment' , they're going to say, 'What the hell are you talking about? This is not our problem? The environment is the least of my problems. This and this and this is my problem'. So I also think it's a difficult topic because some people may think that I can't care less if there's a tree outside my house. At least I have a roof over my head."*

Essentially, the studies by Hunter et al. (2010) and Hood et al. (2011) indicate that for some people in poverty, the socio-economic circumstances impact on their perceptions of the natural environment. With small livelihoods and structural and social inequality, impoverished people can become inconsiderate to the natural environment due to their desperate need for survival.

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Sub-theme 4.7: People's need for survival

Many of the participants explained that poverty-stricken community members focussed on surviving most of the time, and less on caring for the natural resources surrounding them. Poor people who recycled recyclable materials did so, not to help in taking care of the environment, but to obtain an income for themselves. This meant that if litter in the community was not recyclable, they would not collect it. These sentiments are displayed in the views of the following participant:

> P1: *"…But, most of the people who are staying here, they are poor. Not in terms of food, but educational level is, it's just, 'I just want to survive today'."*

> P2: *"The only shop that makes money in 175, plot 175, is a shebeen and maybe a spaza shop, but they so many there is about 200, 300 spaza shop. So they don't make money, that's just survival…I mean, they also worried about their survival that they don't look and care for whatever is around them."*

> P4: *"The only initiative that I have realised – but I don't know… it's about taking care of the environment or it's motivated by money, 'How much will I get out of this?' It's this one of recycling lately… but I think it is motivated by the short-term gains, that 'I will get maybe R50 if I recycle this much' … They just want the money…it's their way of surviving because they are not earning anything at the moment, so they end up engaging into these things by recycling projects… but then, when they do it, they don't have this intention that, 'We are cleaning the environment'."*

Poverty-stricken people, particularly women and children, rely on natural resources for their livelihood, health, and security (Rai, 2019:2; Barbier, 2010:635). Also, poverty-stricken people are at higher risk of being directly faced with the challenges that come with environmental degradation, especially since their economic capital is dependent on natural resources (Rai, 2019:2-3; Barbier, 2010:636). In other words, people in poverty rely on natural resources to eat, to obtain an income and most importantly, to survive, and yet they are in the forefront of facing environmental degradation due to their reliance on the natural resources.

Studies have confirmed that poverty-stricken families often deplete their natural resources in their efforts to sustain a livelihood or to simply stay alive, and that poor people are at times responsible for excessive wood-cutting and waste thrown into gutters in more urban areas

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(Peprah, Abalo, Amoako, Nyonyo, Duah & Adomako, 2017:2). Poor, hungry people tend to till nutrient-deficient soil, live in slums, litter, and make streams dirty with waste due to their lack of necessities for living, lack of access to basic social services, and pursue survival in desperation because they live below the minimum standard that is fit for human dignity and good well-being (Peprah et al., 2017:2; Barbier, 2010:636). This is consistent with what the participants expressed, that the poor in their communities could not care for the natural environment, because they were too focussed on staying alive and sustaining meagre livelihoods.

However, empirical studies refute the theory that poverty-stricken people are the sole cause of environmental degradation, as there is growing evidence that powerful and industrial economic sectors have just a large a role to play in environmental injustice as the poor do, and are capable of rectifying environmentally unjust activities (Peprah et al., 2017:2; Rai, 2019:4; Daregot, Ayalneh, Belay, & Degnet, 2015:518). In addition to this rebuttal, Barbier (2010:636) states that inasmuch as the poor tend to be concentrated in degraded natural environments, and they tend to deplete the natural environment for survival needs, it can be too simplistic to conclude that poverty causes natural resource depletion. Instead, poverty plays an important factor in environmental injustice, as do several other key factors, such as skilled vs. unskilled labour and lack of job opportunities, and the poor tend to be put into a complex position just to stay alive (Barbier, 2010:636). However, what this does show is that the destitute, in their vulnerability, are often not always in a position to live with environmental sustainability in mind, but are instead forced to do whatever is necessary for survival, even if it means degrading the natural environment.

In contrast to this, Rai (2019:9) explains that although poverty-stricken people rely greatly on natural resources to survive, empirical studies show that they are also in a unique position to be good stewards of natural resources and encourage environmental sustainability, and where possible, make good effort to protect the meagre resources available to them in the natural environment. Various studies have shown the positive outcomes of poor people managing their environmental resources, for the sake of their livelihoods and for food (Rai, 2019:9). In support of this statement, other authors also explain that impoverished people are not the only factor in natural resource degradation, because political, cultural, and institutional factors must be considered as well, and some impoverished people sustain the natural environment far more than they degrade it (Daregot et al., 2015:518).

Theme 5: Projects that promote environmental justice and community environmental sustainability

The participants were asked about any projects that their organisations were implementing that they thought might be related to community and environmental sustainability. Within the participants' narratives, environmental projects which promote environmental justice and social projects promoting community sustainability were described. These projects are discussed as sub-themes below.

Sub-theme 5.1: Environmental projects

Many of the participants described projects that were related to the natural environment, and the most frequently cited project was a vegetable garden. The projects described were aimed at assisting the community to lessen poverty while focussing on sustainability:

> P1: "*So here they are [participant showed researcher a picture of community members gardening], working in the gardens in Mokonyane, and so they have planted gardens there that, from the gardens, they, vegetable gardens – they get food to feed the community members. So there's that…*"

Participant P1 added that she is not directly involved, but that other colleagues within the organisation were participating to help the community with their food gardening. Other participants explained that they have either tried or are busy working on a community food gardening project:

> P2: "*…in the community we've tried gardening project.*"

> P3: "*We are doing a garden in the yard…You can see, we are producing tomatoes.*"

Community-driven food gardens afford people in poverty the opportunity to have a green space, to grow their own fresh food, to enjoy the leisure of growing plants, and the opportunity to build social capital with fellow community members who also participate (Porter & McIlvaine-Newsad, 2013:380). Another participant explained that their organisation tried encouraging food gardening, and the use of an initiative developed by the organisation called Makhura Bags, where food could be cooked inside a neatly sown bag that was lined with polystyrene filling. This eliminated the need to use much electricity over a long period of time to cook food.

P4: "*…we used to have this programme of, programme of poverty alleviation, but it was centred around encouraging them to have gardening and also we used to have this thing of Makhura Bags, we… marketed the idea that people should use Makhura Bag to cook… because it uses less energy… you can only boil or cook …after this, after the boil has reached this heat, remove it from the stove and put it into the Makhura Bag, then you'll close [the pot] and that [Makhura Bag], it will cook itself with that same heat that it started with until it gets done. You just use Makhura Bag and it will save you electricity.*"

In empirical studies, World Vision, an NGO which focusses on humanitarian efforts, partnered with local residents of Humbo, Ethiopia, who depended on cutting trees and charcoal for their livelihoods (Brown, Dettmann, Rinaudo, Tefera & Tofu, 2010:322). Focussing on the notion that local community-based projects are often successful at easing poverty, locals were encouraged to re-grow and manage various species of trees as part of a programme, and after four years, the re-growth of the trees planted led to less flooding, less soil erosion, and wildlife and birds began to return to the region (Brown et al., 2010:328). The authors explain that such projects encouraged community-driven change that can lessen poverty while also focussing on sustainability and restoring the natural environment. Thus, empirical studies support what the participants have described about their vegetable gardens and the empowering impact that environmental projects can have on impoverished communities. Projects such as community gardens can thus produce the vegetables for the heat-preserving *Makhura Bag* project. Anguelovski and Martínez Alier (2014:172) aver that projects like community-driven food gardens are important for community sustainability because they preserve a community's history, sustain any cultural roots that exist synchronously with the natural surroundings of the community, foster social cohesion, and help to repair fragmentation among community members. Participant P4 describes how he encourages community members to keep their yards clean and free of litter:

P4: "*I don't know if it has anything to do with project or anything, but we were also encouraging that people should, when we come to your family or when we conduct home visits, we expect to find your yard to be clean…Do you pick up the papers, all those things, do you keep your yard clean?*"

Inasmuch as the participant was trying to help community members learn to take responsibility of their lives by learning to keep their yards clean, it was also a way to make community members conscious about taking care of the natural environment. Having

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community members participate in taking care of the natural environment and take responsibility is important and is one of the ways that encourages community members to have a sense of control about what belongs to them (Eizenberg, 2012:107). When community members participate in managing their living space, their participation becomes a tool to generate feelings of psychological ownership and responsibility (Eizenberg, 2012:107), which is important not only for their personal lives but for the natural environment surrounding them.

Non-governmental organisations are instrumental in helping communities – urban and rural – to develop a better appreciation of and responsibility for the natural environment and resources available. For instance, in New York, two NGOs assisted urban dwellers to begin community gardens that encouraged community participation and environmental sustainability (Eizenberg, 2012:117) and in Benin, an NGO and CBO partnered to produce a solar-powered project to help rural dwellers with vegetable production which resulted in successful results in social and environmental sustainability (Burney & Naylor, 2012:115, 121). Considering the participants' responses about starting food gardens with their community members or clients, and the consistence of their actions with what studies indicate about communities doing food gardening, environmental projects can be positive factors for community and environmental sustainability.

Sub-theme 5.2: Social projects

All the participants described a variety of projects aimed at the community members' social sustainability which their organisations facilitated. Apart from the environmental projects described in the previous sub-theme, the other projects which the participants specified were projects which assisted community members with social issues, such as domestic violence, homelessness, unemployment, poverty alleviation, health care, and education.

> P1: *"…we have a life house… It's a house in the community. So if you need food, if you need shelter, if you have domestic violence, you need help with homework, you can go there. And then they have gardens there as well."*

> P6: *"[We have] awareness raising campaigns on gender-based violence and health education…workshops and community dialogue on GBV and health related issues…work readiness, life skills, job preparations for homeless community members…Human trafficking workshops…"*

Participant P6 added that free legal advice was offered to urban dwellers regarding social services, and a monthly outreach programme targeted at helping the destitute to gain access to employment opportunities, obtain shelter, and to obtain medical assistance. Participant P2 explained that their organisation provided parental skills training, projects initiated by social work students, and an entrepreneurship training to community members to develop people's soft and hard skills:

> P2: *"…we are giving at [the organisation's] Entrepreneurs Development Training and very few are coming from the informal settlement. Now we started nine years ago and then a lot of people came, but I realised that they come for the certificate, to get a better work opportunity… we have a few trainings that we do for business skills development and leadership skills and all of that and when we talk about leadership skills we talked about how to handle conflict, how to communicate, how to think about what you're doing."*

Similar to the efforts described by the participants, a study conducted in Bangladesh on the role of NGOs in sustainable development found that NGOs have a critical role to play in assisting destitute community members, especially by alleviating poverty through the creation of income-earning initiatives and economically supportive projects (Hassan & Forhad, 2013:68). Lapeyre (2011:223) expounds on unrelated, successful socio-economic partnerships, initiated by NGOs, between rural community members and tourism companies in South America, Kenya and Southern Africa. The partnerships involved local community members participating in tourism activities – which provided them with employment – and economic returns which were shared with the community members. Results from studies done to assess the outcomes of such partnerships indicate that income is generated sustainably well for the local community and environmental sustainability is encouraged (Lapeyre, 2011:223).

Scarlato (2013:1274) explains that social enterprises, which are entrepreneurial undertakings that result in social and economic sustainability, are usually initiated by grass-root NGOs in developing countries, with the aim of responding to social crises. For instance, participant P8 described how some community members experienced their awareness campaigns and socio-economic assistance from their organisation, explaining that they "did not know they had rights" and that the assistance "makes a huge difference because they can stand on their own" especially after receiving economic and emotional empowerment. In one of the organisations, participant P3 explained that a portion of each child's pre-school

fees (pre-school managed by the organisation) is placed into a savings fund opened for each child, with the parents' consent.

> P3: "*…we have invested on behalf of the parents, we have contracts with Old Mutual and it's actually on behalf of the kids, so that if one of the foster parents is no more, the children will have a little bit of money spared…if people are financially capable, they will look after themselves better.*"

By focussing on innovative ideas, social enterprises can be made to be self-sustainable and can be a solution to poverty reduction, provide social benefits to people in need, and reduce the chances of people in poverty from being socially excluded (Scarlato, 2013:1274), as shown in the examples which the participants described. This can be a positive factor for community sustainability, because the poor can have avenues of participating in the economy, while also obtaining social benefits, and this puts the community in a better position to be sustained for several generations in the future.

Theme 6: Partnerships for promoting environmental justice and community sustainability

The participants were easily able to describe the various stakeholders they were engaged with and that they believed were necessary for environmental justice and community sustainability. Partnerships mentioned national and provincial governments as stakeholders in assisting with several endeavours which the participants' organisations were working on, and considered important for any future plans for promoting community sustainability. Most of the participants expressed that other NGOs, CBOs, universities, private sector stakeholders, community members, churches, local government, and clinics and hospitals as partnerships that were important for their endeavours.

> P3: "*No, we are engaged with government. We are also engaging with individuals and small businesses, small and big businesses. I've already given you a story of Dodo's [*local business supporting the organisation*], I've already given you a story that we have individuals that contribute to the sustainability of the organisation. We just wish we have more people and more companies, but we are forever working very hard to identify those companies that may have an interest in supporting NGOs.*"

> P5: "[Department of] *Social Development, we've also got them and other people involved in the forum, that I mentioned with the previous question. So it's*

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> *Social Development, SAPS, Qaka Shelters, Correctional Services, Churches, Universities – I think UP and UNISA – ja. We've got also other institutions…Ja.*"

P6:   "*We have collaborated with Department of Health, they fund some of our programmes such as HIV/AIDS programmes and outreach programmes where we go into the communities to educate and create awareness on different health matters.*"

Dominelli (2013:431) explains that when developmental models (the structures that businesses use to increase their income) are not planned for future generations, and when power dynamics between businesses and other organisations in a community are not even, this can be a contributory factor towards environmental injustice. In contrast, in order for environmental and community sustainability to be achieved, various actors within a community need to work together and build sustainable partnerships, so that future generations can be planned for and a more inclusive, sustainable economy can be built (Bitzer & Glasbergen, 2015:35).

As most of the participants in this study expressed that other stakeholders' roles are useful in building sustainable communities, their roles are also vital for partnering with NGOs in communities to tackle social and environmental issues. Bitzer and Glasbergen (2015:35) describe this important notion that NGOs and businesses cannot address issues of sustainability individually, but instead would thrive better when they combine their capabilities and available resources. Harangazó and Zilahy (2015:18) reiterate this notion, emphasising that environmental problems are complicated and need collaborative partnerships to be resolved while encouraging sustainability. Presenting another angle of the same notion, Dominelli (2013:431) explains that a collaborative relationship like this would be one of the ways to counter the effects of a neoliberal system which undermines the capabilities of community members, especially low-income people, and lessens the growth of their resilience. Ultimately, by working together to eradicate challenges such as unemployment, pollution, and poverty, collaborations between governments, NGOs, and civil society can enhance and strengthen community sustainability and resilience.

Sustainable planning is needed when human development needs are pursued, and environmental degradation can be worsened if communities do not develop multi-stakeholder partnerships inclusive of the poor (Dominelli, 2013:435). For instance, in Rotterdam, Netherlands, an urban regeneration project was completed, having sustainability in mind, and protecting the social, economic and environmental values vested in the city port

(Frantzesaski, Wittmayer & Loorbach, 2014:407). The project required collaborative and holistic planning between local government, the local community and organisations in the area (Frantzesaski et al., 2014:408). Representatives from the NGOs were among several other stakeholders such as municipality workers, local business individuals, and research institutes in the area who participated in creating the common vision for social, economic, and environmental sustainability for Rotterdam's urban regeneration. (Frantzesaski et al., 2014:410).

The role of national and local government was the most frequently expressed by participants in this study supporting them for community sustainability and environmental justice. Since sustainable development for the environment means meeting citizens' needs with minimal negative impact on the natural environment while protecting the needs of the future, government's role (local and national) becomes essential in managing the contrasting interests between social, economic, and environmental needs (Li, Sinha, Kim & Lee, 2019:162). Expanding on this idea, McAllister and Taylor (2015:87) explain that governments must be inclusive of civil society and local people when they prepare plans to meet people's needs and the vision for sustainability. In other words, it is important to form a trusting relationship with the community and other stakeholders when working on solutions for environmental injustice. It would not be enough to shift the responsibility to the private sector, but instead government should take up its role by accountably overseeing projects/programmes aimed at improving environmental justice, as well as working actively and relationally with NGOs, communities and businesses to achieve sustainability (McAllister & Taylor, 2015:87; Li et al., 2019:172). The role of government in promoting environmental justice and community sustainability has been expressed by the participants as being necessary, and their expressions have been anchored by empirical studies highlighting the same notion.

Theme 7: Social work roles promoting environmental justice and community sustainability

According to the participants, social workers have various roles in promoting environmental justice and community sustainability. Five main roles which the participants spoke about include the roles of educator, researcher, advocate, facilitator and mobiliser. As marginalised communities face the main impact of environmental justice, social workers can use advocacy and community mobilisation so that they can help the marginalised in responding to and coping with natural and human-made disasters (Jarvis, 2019:40). Androff et al. (2017:406) explain that mobilising communities and using advocacy is fundamental to

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community practice, and social workers can collaborate with other disciplines (e.g. politics, ecology, environmental safety, health) to promote environmental and community sustainability, and to fight against the reduction of natural resources.

Sub-theme 7.1: The role of an educator

Dominelli (2013:431) mentions educating people about the natural environment as one of the various roles that social workers must play in promoting environmental justice. Many of the participants stated that social workers have an important role in education, meaning educating community members about the natural environment and its link to people. They also linked educating the community about the natural environment with teaching people about protecting human rights, including taking care of children, avoiding land pollution, encouraging personal hygiene and well-being, and planting trees.

> P1: "*We have a responsibility and it can be great if it can be done…Teach them how to look after the kids, how to throw away the papers, don't leave the filthy pots and pans for the mice and whatever to come, cockroaches …teach the parents to look after the environment…plant a tree…*"

> P2: "*We have a big role…Our role is in the community, [to] talk to people about training, get them involved, change their lives in a different way, you know…developmental social work... See what's in your community, see what assets you have, what's the problems and then address that with assets that you have…tell them pick up your papers, pick up next to the road you can't leave it like that… show people the realities but to not just show them but to discuss it with them…*"

Additionally, social work promoting environmental justice involves concern that arises because of violated human rights, degraded natural environments, and various inequalities (Dominelli, 2013:437). Since some participants had seen a need to help community members learn about human rights, the natural environment, and inequality, they took action and started teaching community members economic and social skills to help them alleviate their poverty, unemployment, or negatively impacted social relationships. By teaching them various skills, community members developed agency and were able to participate in the community, and experience a better sense of well-being, as explained by participant P7.

> P7: "*…for us to impart that knowledge to them, it really makes a huge difference because they're able to stand on their own, they are able to make it from the*

situation, they are able to express themselves, to be those kind of people not to be reserved anymore to participate in the community, in a team, to engage in community activities."

Findings corroborate with the view of Miller et al. (2012:275) that promoting environmental justice involves teaching people about the natural environment, and the current and future generations which need the natural environment for survival, while also having to protect it. Miller et al. (2012:273) discuss 17 principles of environmental justice which were established at the National People of Colour Environmental Leadership Summit during 1991 to support the environmental justice movement with stronger single-mindedness. The social work profession can use the principles as a framework to guide its role in environmental justice. In line with the findings, one of the principles of environmental justice (principle 16) describes the need for current and coming generations to be taught about environmental issues, and social work can apply this principle through community education. Participants indication that they provide community members with skills to enhance their resilience and self-reliance socially and economically is consistent with the view of Dominelli (2013:437) who states that while social work is concerned about social and economic inequalities, it also aims to empower marginalised communities and vulnerable groups, and seeks to make a positive impact in reforming socio-economic forces that impact poor people.

Sub-theme 7.2: The role of a researcher

Many of the participants described researcher as another role that social workers can use to promote environmental justice and community sustainability. They explained that social workers can use research to do problem-solving, to find resources in the community that can be beneficial in promoting community sustainability, and to participate alongside community members in finding solutions to problems or resources that are needed.

P4: "*…we can research, and we can come up with ways which can help to solve that challenge.*"

P7: "*We were given skills, tools to work with so we can use that. It must not end up in school or theory or when we do research but we have to use those tools in our relevant space so that other people can benefit and from there… you have to do research…you research, do mapping, see what services are there in your community that can help.*"

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P8: "*…find out from the community what it is they think will help out of that situation and try to help them find resources to help them build what they think can assist.*"

What participants have described are consistent with what scholars describe about social work's research role in improving sustainability and eradicating environmental injustice in communities. Androff et al. (2017:403) refer to a food security project where students partnered with the Community Food Connect organisation in Arizona to tackle poverty through community work, research, and awareness-raising about the natural environment, using local resources, and sustainability. Research played a key role in the project since the students and the CFC organisation had to answer necessary questions about communal problems and structural barriers that were challenges to the community's food security (Androff et al., 2017:403).

Jarvis (2019:41) explains that social work research needs to be involved in connecting social justice issues to environmental justice issues, and social work's role in promoting environmental justice includes building knowledge and research especially about a range of social issues and economic development. Miller et al. (2012:270) indicate that social work has an important paradigm shift to make from understanding and helping people from only a social environment perspective to an ecological environment perspective, and add that making this shift will need much research and debate. Social workers, being change agents in communities, need to guide research and policy agendas to focus on sustainability and environmental justice issues that vulnerable groups face (Schmitz, Matyók, Sloan & James, 2012:283).

Social workers can use participatory action research to inform policies and interventions about environmental issues (Miller et al., 2012:275). After learning about research through social work education, social workers can use the research role to innovatively promote environmental justice and community sustainability, through engaging with communities (Teixera & Krings, 2015:523; Androff et al., 2017:401). Supporting the approach of using participatory action research for helping communities with various social and environmental issues, Teixera and Krings (2015:522) explain that research methods that include people's participation can create an empowering space for marginalised people. Through research, social workers can partner with community members throughout the process of research for environmental issues, and share the meaning of the research with them in a manner that they understand, so that as a community they can have better understanding about environmental issues (Teixera & Krings, 2015:522).

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Sub-theme 7.3: The role of an advocate

Participants expressed their views about social work advocacy promoting social and environmental justice, sustainability and human rights.

> P2: "*…we have a big role in advocacy.*"

> P6: "*Social workers are advocates for social and economical justice, the interconnected concepts of sustainability, sustainable development, environmentalism, human rights, and environmental justice have yet to be fully incorporated into the core knowledge and value base of social work education and practice.*"

> P7: "*…advocate for those who are voiceless.*"

Participant P6's description of social workers being advocates for social and economic justice is supported by Dominelli (2012:194) who explains that in green social work, social workers are involved in advocating for people to be involved in economic activities, especially activities that lead to poverty eradication. In another research article, Dominelli (2013:438) explains that advocacy becomes an important role in pursuing environmental justice because social workers advocate for people's rights and yet they also advocate for changes that can protect the natural environment and the decision-making that accompanies that, because top-down approaches often ignore people's authentic participation and undermine the natural environment's dignity. This is also consistent with how participants expressed that social work's role as advocate is being a voice for people who are vulnerable and do not have a voice.

The 17 Principles of Environmental Justice established at the National People of Colour Environmental Leadership Summit during 1991 have not been formally adopted in social work practice, yet the principles provide a useful guideline for environmentally just social work practice (Miller et al., 2012:275). Social work advocacy is an important part of how some of these principles can be applied. For example, principle 2 states that respect and justice must be the founding values for public policies; policies should not be focussed on economic gain only, and should not be obscured by bias or discrimination. Social work's application of principle 2 means advocating for public policy to be socially and environmentally just and communities' governments should work with local people to encourage human rights being upheld (Miller et al., 2012:275).

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Androff et al. (2017:409) explain that social work can address environmental injustice through activism, advocacy, and community projects that generate environmental awareness. Miller et al. (2012:281) support this view by stating that social work is well-positioned to tackle environmental injustice due to its capability to advocate for environmental and social justice through collaboration and building people's capacities.

Social work's advocacy also forms part of the IASSW and IFSW's guiding-posts for the paradigm shift social work is making in social work education and training by including environmental justice (Teixeira & Krings, 2015:516). Other ways in which social work can use advocacy to address environmental injustice and promote community sustainability is by moving from person in environment (PIE) paradigm to person and environment (PAE) paradigm in micro-level work, linking people to services that they need in meso-level work, and involving community members when addressing environmental injustice issues and structural imbalances in macro-level work (Teixeira & Krings, 2015:516).

Sub-theme 7.4: The role of a facilitator

One participant described facilitation by explaining that when it is too difficult for community members to get necessary social or economic services, they leave the community, but if the social work organisation assists them over time, then people's lives improve and this impacts on community sustainability positively.

> P3: "*…if the environment is badly kept, it pushes people away to better places, because there, another person can help you…you don't have airtime to call the municipality. So my understanding of our service, how it impacts the sustainability is that the impact may not be fast, but we know that sustainability is an on-going process, and it is not, um, quick-quick development…the first person becoming better in a year, then we have the second person becoming better in a year…*"

Social work's role of facilitation is broad, and allows social workers to assist community members with challenges from various levels. For instance, Schmitz et al. (2012:284) explain that social workers can be facilitators by aiding communities in the process of transformation, and by creating a space where communities can be empowered to act on social or environmental issues. Social workers in their facilitation role use their skills and resources to help people access services that people would otherwise not have known how to access, and they help them through various stages of challenges that the communities face.

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Schmitz et al. (2012:282) explain that because of the direct contact that social workers have with vulnerable groups, they are able to use their skills to build relationships and thus facilitate change over time, and this ultimately helps to address economic repression, and environmental injustice. Dominelli (2013:438) expands this idea by stating that social workers can use their role of being facilitator by crossing interdisciplinary divides and connecting vulnerable community members to experts, and use their knowledge to create partnerships between different disciplines. Other participants describe using a strengths-based perspective to facilitate change, and using logical or practical ideas to help communities with their businesses so that their businesses would improve, which would thus help people garner better incomes (for example, helping people measure their productivity, so that their businesses would function better).

> P2: "*…you must look that's community and developmental social work. See what's in your community, see what assets you have, what's the problems and then address that with assets that you have…*"

> P3: "*I was helping people to be productive of their small business… [I helped] measure productivity and wastage. Wastage of material, wastage of time, wastage of human resources…*"

One participant shared her view about social work education, that social work education should facilitate better understanding of social issues in relation to sustainability and environmental issues, as that will help social workers fulfil their roles better in practice. This would therefore help social workers link various services better, and make the profession more efficient at facilitating change.

> P6: "*For those who are still studying towards this profession, they should be helped to gain awareness about pressing problems of inequality around their communities and to identify sustainable solutions to the very real environmental crises facing humanity today and for social workers to embrace sustainability.*"

This quote is supported by the results from empirical studies, that instructing social work students in adequate theory and practical knowledge about environmental justice allows them to be more successful and proficient in tackling social and environmental issues (Androff et al., 2017:410).

Sub-theme 7.5: The role of mobiliser

Participants described their views of mobilising in different ways. Some participants referred to talking to the community members about their actions so that they can make them more aware of their behaviours and ways of thinking. Others shared their perspectives about making alliances with other companies in the community to deal with environmental or social issues.

> P1:   "*So it is difficult because I really believe that sometimes the need of the people are greater than the thinking about sustainability. And I think that that's something that's, I don't think it's easy to teach that to someone, to say that there is a lake of fish, you can't catch all the fish today just because you… There is a fish, you don't have to catch the fish.*"

> P2:   "*…show people the realities but to not just show them but to discuss it with them…have meetings at different places and that's what the Department of Social Development is doing and that I like. When we have training or meeting, go to this organisation, then you see something about the environment and see, well, that they're working and you learn a little bit more, so that's a good example...*"

> P3:   "*…the community is not aware that they actually do injustice to the environment.*"

Dominelli (2013:433) explains that part of mobilising means raising people's consciousness about environmental issues, and talking to them so that they are aware about the environment and that it is possible for them to take action about the vulnerabilities in the natural and social environments. Leonard and Pelling (2010:140) expand this understanding by explaining that before communities can be adequately mobilised, they must first be made aware about the contrasting justices and injustices they face, and be educated about what they have been oblivious to. Also, through the use of partnerships and social capital, different groups of society should be brought together into partnerships so that the vulnerable can stand up against structures which are oppressive to them and/or the natural environment around them (Leonard & Pelling, 2010:140). Dominelli (2013:433) supports this statement by stating that through constructive alliances, and through consciousness-raising, social workers can bring the vulnerable and other stakeholders together and the necessary resources, to bring about positive social action which results in the promotion of human rights and environmental sustainability. What the participants described corroborates with

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what authors have explained. This means that social workers in the role of mobiliser, engage in raising awareness about problems, and draw important resources and communities together through dynamic social action so that human and environmental rights can be defended and upheld.

While Leonard and Pelling (2010:137-138) describe various forms of mobilisation, such as protesting, public awareness campaigns, political engagements and networking meetings, Schmitz et al. (2012:283) explain that social work can mobilise through working with different professions and on different levels of intervention, and that tackling human and environmental injustices requires civic action with empowerment and participation from the community.

Androff et al. (2017:401) expound on three case studies conducted by social work students about how they mobilised various communities to address social and environmental injustices that the communities were facing. The students, consistent to what Dominelli (2013:433) and Schmitz et al. (2012:283) have described, made use of various partnerships with business and governmental structures, worked across micro-, meso- and macro-levels of interventions, and used community education, social action, and varying mobilisation techniques to help the communities take action about their challenges. This further provides empirical support to the participants' perspectives about making communities aware about actions they can take, while also empowering them, to stand up for human and environmental rights, and building alliances to support important civic action.

3.13 SUMMARY

Chapter 3 presented an overview of the research methodology, the ethical considerations of the study and the limitations of the study. Seven themes were identified and discussed, namely the conceptualisation of environmental justice, factors influencing environmental injustice, target groups affected by environmental injustice, factors which influence community and environmental sustainability, projects that promote environmental justice and community sustainability, partnerships for promoting environmental justice and community sustainability, and social work roles promoting environmental justice and community sustainability. The key findings will be discussed in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4: KEY FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter concludes the research study. First, the extent to which the research goal and objectives were achieved is presented. Next, the key findings and conclusions drawn from the study are presented, followed by the recommendations derived from the study.

4.2 GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of the study was to explore and describe the role of social workers in promoting environmental justice for sustainable communities from an NGO perspective in Tshwane.

The goal was accomplished through the following objectives:

Objective 1

- To conceptualise environmental justice and community sustainability in social work within the context of green social work.

This objective was achieved in Chapter 2 by describing the important connection and co-existence between the natural environment and people, and exploring the contrast between the person-in-environment paradigm versus the person-and-environment paradigm (Besthorn, 2012:248-249; Miller et al., 2012:271). In section 2.1 of Chapter 2, scholarly viewpoints (Dylan, 2013:73; Wilson, 2011:18; Patel, 2015:5) highlighted the social and economic divide in the global society, the lag in human development progress for marginalised communities, and the negative impact of an anthropocentric culture on the natural environment. Furthermore, in section 2.6 the researcher explained that according to Besthorn (2013:33) and Dominelli (2012:6) green social work advocates for the awareness to balance the needs of both the natural and the social environments in society and that through green social work, social workers are in a prime position to fight against structural, social and economic inequality while promoting sustainability.

Objective 2

- To explore and describe social workers' understanding of environmental justice.

This objective was achieved in Chapter 3. Participants expressed their views on what environmental justice is to them (see theme 1). Further descriptions from social workers

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about the concept of environmental justice included factors influencing environmental justice (see theme 2). Participants described tree culling, water wastage, and poor care of natural spaces as environmental factors which influence environmental justice (see theme 2 sub-theme 1), and socio-economic inequality coupled with social issues as social factors which influence environmental justice (see theme 2 sub-theme 2). This topic was also discussed in Chapter 2 (see sub-section 2.2.1 – 2.2.2) about socio-economic inequality impacting negatively on human development and environmental sustainability, and that social work is in a prime position to use its role towards social and environmental justice (Dylan, 2013:73; Wilson, 2011:18; Patel, 2015:5; Dominelli, 2012:3).

Participants described children, the elderly, people who are ill, and impoverished people as the groups most vulnerable to environmental injustice (see theme 3). In addition, the literature review highlighted studies by Ogneva-Himmelberger and Huang (2015:165-174) emphasising children, the poor, and the elderly as being vulnerable groups facing environmental injustice (see Chapter 2, section 2.1 and 2.2.2).

Objective 3

- To explore and describe the activities and interventions that social workers engage with in addressing environmental justice issues.

The objective was achieved in Chapter 2 (see sub-section 2.5) where scholarly views on social work activities and interventions included social work in education and research, participation in economic issues, working with communities at grassroots level, being reflective about environmental justice issues, and activism towards promoting environmental justice. The objective was also achieved in Chapter 3, where participants spoke about the various projects which they were involved in to promote environmental justice (see theme 5). Participants described the types of partnerships which they perceived as significant for being able to promote environmental justice (see theme 6). Additionally, participants described social workers playing key roles through education, research, advocacy, facilitation, and mobilisation towards community sustainability (see theme 7). Both the literature review and empirical findings showed consistency with the notion that social workers can play several roles in promoting environmental justice.

Objective 4

- To explore and describe social workers' contribution to sustainable communities

In Chapter 2 (see sub-section 2.4 and 2.6), it was explained that social work has an important role to play in sustainable development as well as environmental protection (Pulla, 2013:265-266). Through social development and social entrepreneurship, social work can help people learn new skills that can benefit them and the natural environment, and social work has a significant position in fighting against structural and political inequalities which impact negatively on social and environmental justice (Peeters, 2012:294; Dominelli, 2012:25; Noble, 2016:17). Empirical findings showed that social workers have a role in promoting environmental justice for sustainable communities by educating communities about the natural environment (sub-theme 7.1) and in doing further research about promoting environmental justice (sub-theme 7.2). Participants described how social workers' roles in advocacy were crucial in fighting for sustainability and human rights (sub-theme 7.3) and facilitating a process where communities can improve their well-being through developmental change (sub-theme 7.4). Through mobilisation, social workers can bring communities together to fight against structural and political inequality (sub-theme 7.5).

Objective 5

- To propose guidelines for the role of social workers in promoting environmental justice for sustainable communities.

This objective is addressed in this chapter in sub-section 4.4.

4.3   KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

In this section, this research study's key findings and conclusions are presented:

- Findings indicate that participants have a partial understanding about the balance between the natural environmental and communities, and that there is a significant inter-relationship between the natural environment and people. Social workers are growing in their understanding that people, the natural environment and the economy are dynamically related, and that both the natural environment and people should be equally protected and advocated for. However, their understanding of environmental justice is not yet fully applied by them in practice. Also, there are some social workers in Tshwane who are not familiar with environmental justice in social work.

    It can be concluded that social workers have made some progress in Tshwane to include a focus on the natural environment. However, much more needs to be done

to shift social work's focus to promote environmental justice for sustainable communities.

- The findings indicated that participants could connect challenges in the natural environment to social issues in communities, and recognise that the various challenges dynamically impact on each other. They could identify that tree culling, littering, and water wastage was related to social issues such as the lack of municipal services, the lack of education, and the breakdown in social capital, and that these problems influence each other. However, they do not always link these various natural and social environment issues to the concept of environmental justice. Findings also show that social workers easily identify children, the elderly, the ill, and the poor as vulnerable groups in society which are the hardest hit by environmental injustice.

  The conclusion is that social workers understand the challenges that are respectively posed by the social and natural environment, however not necessarily how they are inter-twined and related to environmental injustices and green social work. Understanding how social justice and environmental justice are inter-related will assist social workers to integrate green social work in practice.

- The findings revealed that participants recognise the stakeholders in communities who are instrumental in achieving positive change. Social workers in Tshwane have identified the helpful role that government, other NGOs, community members, businesses, and the private sector have in positively impacting communities. This shows that social workers know that networks and partners are an important key to building sustainable communities, and that various disciplines must work together to achieve social justice. This is also instrumental for promoting environmental justice, because communities can be mobilised to promote environmental sustainability when relevant stakeholders and vulnerable groups work together (Dominelli, 2013:433; Leonard & Pelling, 2010:140). The participants explained that in their practice, raising consciousness about environmental injustice was useful, and this was possible because of the participation of other stakeholders helping them to make communities aware that promoting environmental justice can contribute to sustainable communities.

  It can be concluded that social workers need to continue identifying and working with partners in communities who can assist them to create awareness of environmental injustices and how they can collectively promote environmental justice for sustainable communities.

- The findings showed that participants use various interventions to promote environmental justice and development for sustainable communities. They named food gardens, social entrepreneurial projects, and economic projects such as training community members to be entrepreneurs, starting saving funds for children, and basic business skills training to help vulnerable groups experiencing an improved sense of well-being, while protecting the natural environment. They explained that social workers can teach communities about taking care of the natural environment while protecting human rights, because communities can thus learn to be more sustainable by taking care of the natural environment. Furthermore, participants proposed interventions that promote sustainability for both people and the natural environment, such as encouraging community members to use solar power to cook food and to keep their yards clean from litter. Participants did not recognise that many of their current interventions and projects had green social work underpinnings and indeed promote environmental justice.

  It can be concluded that as social workers become more aware about the environment and green social work, they can better recognise environmental injustices and how to include the environment in social and economic projects to promote environmental justice and sustainable communities.

- Participants identified a role for social workers in promoting environmental justice through advocacy, education, research, mobilisation and facilitation. They expressed their views from a perspective that social workers in Tshwane is in a positive and strong position to advocate for people and the natural environment, and that more political and professional spaces are needed to be traversed by social work so that more communities can be helped and empowered to be sustainable. However, their understanding of the social work roles did not have a full integration of environmental justice.

  The conclusion is that social workers need to shift their focus in their advocate role to include environmental justice, especially in terms of facing structural and political barriers that prevent human and natural sustainability. Through the theoretical undergirding of green social work, social workers need to become more aware of how they can include an environmental focus in their general social work roles.

4.4   RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the findings and conclusions which have been described above, the researcher has made the following recommendations regarding social work's role in promoting environmental justice for sustainable communities.

4.4.1   Increased awareness and learning about environmental justice and green social work

The findings have shown that most participants did not have a full understanding of the interrelationship between the natural, economic, and social environments in communities. To address this gap, awareness needs to be raised among social workers in Tshwane about environmental justice and social work. The social work curriculum at Universities should incorporate an environmental justice focus to prepare social work graduates for green social work. Social workers in Tshwane need to embrace an ecological approach and adopt green social work as practice model to promote environmental justice and sustainable communities. Practicing social workers can incorporate learning about environmental justice through accrediting continuing professional development (CPD) courses or workshops that teach about promoting environmental justice and green social work for sustainable communities. The social work curricula and CPD programmes should include socio-economic investment strategies such as social entrepreneurship that take the environment into account. NGOs should encourage social workers to attend CPD accredited courses and webinars for professional registration at the SACSSP.

4.4.2   Encouraging stakeholder partnerships for environmental justice

In this study, social workers showed that they could identify important partners, including government, NGOs, community members, businesses and the private sector in achieving improved welfare and development for communities. The findings indicated that stakeholder-partnerships are an important aspect to promoting environmental justice, especially working from a multi-disciplinary approach. The National Coalition for Social Services (NACOSS) could serve as a platform for NGOs to prepare organisations and social workers to incorporate environmental justice and sustainable development into social work to reach people who are vulnerable and contribute to transforming societies.

4.4.3   Raising community awareness and participation

In this study's findings, social workers shared their perspectives based on their grassroots-level activities and interventions with communities. Social workers expressed their belief in the profession having an important contribution to make towards sustainable communities. This indicates the important role that the community plays in environmental justice and sustainability, and that the community should also be actively included in achieving social, economic and environmental sustainability. Social workers should create awareness in communities of environmental injustices and their right to a clean and safe environment. Social workers can facilitate interventions such as social entrepreneurship and practice models based on green social work to help communities develop ecological initiatives that can be sustained by communities themselves. In doing this, social workers can teach communities about ecology and human society, but also establish ways to encourage communities to become more sustainable.

4.4.4   Recommendation for further research studies

This research study was exploratory in nature, and as such can be used as a basis for similar studies in other NGOs in South Africa to understand social workers' current role in environmental justice and their contribution to promote sustainable development.

A pilot study can be done with the participating NGOs in this study to look at the sustainability of projects where an environmental justice focus is integrated with social investment strategies.

An analysis can be done of social welfare policies and social policies to explore the extent that social, economic and environmental foci are integrated in promoting sustainable development.

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Date: 26 July 2018

To whom it may concern,

I, Sanet Fagan, managing Director of SA Cares for Life hereby grant Nomcebo Shabalala permission to conduct her research study at our organisation and we look forward to working with her in this regard.

Warm Regards

Sanet Fagan

KAMCARE

SOCIAL AND TRAINING SERVICES

PBO 930/029/982   NPC 2008/020258/08

Our Ref: Ms L Landman

E-mail: liezel@kamcare.org

Tel: 072 150 3994

To: Ms N Shabalala

Re: Request for permission to conduct a research study in our organisation

I Liezel Landman, Manager of Kamcare Social and Training Services hereby give
Ms Nomcebo Shabalala permission to conduct her research, and to approach
and engage me in our organisation to participate in your study.

Your sincerely,

Liezel Landman

Manager

Office: +27 12 756 4223 * C/o Kameeldrift- and Sinagoge Roads, Kameeldrift East, 0035 * email: info@kamcare.org * Website: http://kamcare.org

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Tel: 012 725-8006
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Plot 1615/0061-62
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NPO: 057-337   Email: info@care-netdevelopment.org Website: www.care- netdevelopment.org

04/07/2018

The Director
Department of Social Development
Regional Office
Delta House
Pretoria
0001

Dear Ms Shabalala

RE: ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RECEIPT AND PERMNISSION

I acknowledge receipt of your request to conduct research in our organization as part of your master's study in Social Development and Policy in the Department of Social Work and Criminology at the University of Pretoria.

I, on behalf of the organization grant you permission to use us as part of your studies. Hope we both benefit from this activity. Looking forward to having you.

Regards

Mokgohloa M.E

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

TSHWANE LEADERSHIP FOUNDATION

Working with Churches and Communities for Urban Transformation

STRENGTHENING LEADERSHIP
AND RESOURCES FOR

WOMEN & GIRLS IN CRISIS

CHILD PROTECTION AND
DEVELOPMENT

HOMELESSNESS

HEALTH DEVELOPMENT

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

URBAN MINISTRY FORMATION

ADVOCACY

DIRECTORS:

WILNA DE BEER (CEO)

TINUS NIENABER

(CHAIRPERSON)

JOEL MAYEPHU

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FLORINCE NORRIS

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Reg. No. 2013 / 034434 / 08

PBO No: 930 045 091

ESTABLISHED IN 1993 AS
PRETORIA COMMUNITY
MINISTRIES

07 August 2018

To whom it may Concern

RE: Permission for Nomcebo Shabalala

Nomcebo Shabalala has requested to do her MSW (Social Development & Policy) (Title: "*The role of social workers in promoting environmental justice for sustainable communities from NGOs' perspective in Tshwane.*) field work research at the Tshwane Leadership Foundation.

The Tshwane Leadership Foundation grants Shabalala to do her field work at TLF. The permission is subject to the ethical clearance granted by the university. The permission and research can commence the moment all relevant documents from the university are in place.

Furthermore, the permission for Shabalala to do the field work at TLF is subject to:

- that Shabalala shares her final draft of the research with the in order to ensure the information regarding the organisation is a true reflection
- Shabalala provides the organisation with a hard copy and electronic copy of the final submission
- Shabalala gives feedback to the organisation of her findings (for example either through a workshop or information sharing session)

The organisation will support Shabalala to ensure her successful implementation of her study. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours Sincerely,

Wayne Renkin
Project Coordinator: Akanani and the Urban Studio
081 789 7835
wayne@tlf.org.za

*We see healthy and vibrant communities
flourishing in God's presence.*

THE SALVATION ARMY
SOUTHERN AFRICA TERRITORY
CENTRAL DIVISION

7 August 2018

Nomcebo Shabalala
Pretoria University

Dear Nomceba

I write on behalf of Lt. Colonel Mercy Mahlangu to grant you permission to approach and engage Social Workers in our organisation to participate in the study.

I trust this will assist you in your research and in achieving your goal.

Yours Faithfully

Major Theresa Malins
Divisional Director for Women's Ministries
Central Division

121 Rissik Street, Braamfontein, Johannesburg   PO Box 756 Rossettenville 2130
Tel 011 408 6400   Fax 011 408 6444   central_dhq@saf.salvationarmy.org   www.salvationarmy.org.za
FOUNDER William Booth GENERAL Brian Peddle TERRITORIAL COMMANDER Keith Conrad
Registration 012-787-NPO PBO Number 930009713

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Social workers

The goal of the study is to explore and describe the role of social workers in promoting environmental justice for sustainable communities

Section A: Biographical Information

1. What is your gender?

Female:		Male:		LGTBIQ:	

2. What is your age group?

Under 24	24-29	30-35	36-40	41-46	47-52	53+

3. What is your highest tertiary qualification?

    ……………………………

4. How long have you been practicing as a social worker?

1-3	4-6	7-10	11+ years

5. In which sector do you work?

    Government ☐

    Non-Profit Organisation ☐

    Parastatal ☐

    Other. (Please specify) …………………

6. In which one of the following geographical areas do you work?

    Urban ☐   Semi-urban ☐   Rural ☐

Section B: QUESTIONS

1. What environmental injustices are common in the communities that you are working in?
2. Who are mostly affected by these injustices, and why do you say so?
3. How is the sustainability of these communities affected by environmental injustices?
4. What programmes and interventions are you, and your organisation/department engaged in, that promote sustainable communities and environmental justice? What impact to they make in terms of what has changed or is in the process of changing?
5. Who are your collaborating with as partners in promoting sustainable communities and environmental justice? Who do think you should engage as partners?
6. You have shared your views on what environmental injustices are prevalent and how it affects the sustainability of communities. How do you think, does it influence and challenge the role of social workers to shift focus to more sustainable practice that consider the environment, especially in the context of developmental social work?
7. What suggestions do you have in preparing and guiding social workers to play a role in contributing to sustainable communities and promoting environmental justice? What will be enabling factors to succeed, and what will be challenges in this regard?
8. Do you have any further comments on the research topic that we have not discussed, but what you think could strengthen the research findings?

Faculty of Humanities

Department of Social Work and Criminology

Researcher: Nomcebo Shabalala
Tel: 012 803 2974
E-mail: u11236346@tuks.co.za

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

1. **Title of the study:** The role of social work in promoting environmental justice for sustainable communities from NGOs perspective in Tshwane

2. **Goal of the study:** To explore and describe the role of social workers in promoting environmental justice for sustainable communities.

3. **Procedures:** The study will use one-on-one interviews to collect data from participants. Each interview is expected to take approximately 1 hour. The interviews will be tape recorded with your permission. The tape recordings will be transcribed for purposes of data analysis. Only the researcher and the study supervisor will have access to the tapes and transcripts which will be stored in a secure place by the University of Pretoria for a period of 15 years. If data is used again, it will be for research purposes.

4. **Risks and discomforts:** There are no known risks and discomforts that may be endured by participants in this study.

5. **Benefits:** Participants will not receive any incentives for being involved in the study. The study will benefit the participants indirectly in that they will contribute to social work theory regarding social work and environmental justice.

6. **Participants' rights:** Participation in the study is voluntary and participants have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Participants have the right to refuse to answer any question that they do not wish to respond to.

7. **Confidentiality and anonymity:** Information collected in the study will be treated confidentially and the names of participants will not appear in the research report or the scientific journal in which the results will be published. Findings will not be presented in a way that could be directly linked to any specific participant.

8. **Person to contact:** If participants have questions or concerns relating to the study, they may contact the researcher at 073 733 2445 or email her at u11236346@tuks.co.za

Declaration

I, …………………………………………….., understand my rights as a research participant, and I voluntarily consent to participate in this study. I understand what the study is about and how and why it is being conducted.

----------------------   --------------------------------   ------------------------------
Date   Place   Participant's signature

----------------------   --------------------------------   ------------------------------
Date   Place   Researcher's signature

Faculty of Humanities
Department of Social Work and Criminology
Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe
Departement Maatskaplike Werk en Kriminologie
Lefapha la Bomotho
Kgoro ya Modiro wa Leago le Bosenyi

Page **2** of **2**

Faculty of Humanities

Research Ethics Committee

3 October 2018

Dear Ms Shabalala

Project:	**The role of social workers in promoting environmental justice for sustainable communities from NGO's perspective in Tshwane.**
Researcher:	**N Shabalala**
Supervisor:	**Prof A Lombard**
Department:	**Social Work and Criminology**
Reference number:	**11266346 (GW20180808HS)**

Thank you for your response to the Committee's correspondence.

I have pleasure in informing you that the Research Ethics Committee formally **approved** the above study at an *ad hoc* meeting held on 2 October 2018. Data collection may therefore commence.

Please note that this approval is based on the assumption that the research will be carried out along the lines laid out in the proposal. Should your actual research depart significantly from the proposed research, it will be necessary to apply for a new research approval and ethical clearance.

We wish you success with the project.

Sincerely

PP

Prof Maxi Schoeman
Deputy Dean: Postgraduate and Research Ethics
Faculty of Humanities
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
e-mail: PGHumanities@up.ac.za

cc: Prof A Lombard(Supervisor)

Fakulteit Geesteswetenskappe
Lefapha la Bomotho

Research Ethics Committee Members: Prof MME Schoeman (Deputy Dean); Prof KL Harris; Mr A Bizos; Dr L Blokland; Dr K Booyens; Dr A-M de Beer; Ms A dos Santos; Dr R Fasselt; Ms KT Govinder Andrew; Dr E Johnson; Dr W Kelleher; Mr A Mohamed; Dr C Puttergill; Dr D Reyburn; Dr M Soer; Prof E Taljard; Prof V Thebe; Ms B Tsebe; Ms D Mokalapa