

***UPLIFTMENT OF THE WORKING POOR IN
SOUTH AFRICA:
A COMPETENCY-BUILDING FRAMEWORK***

**Jacqueline van Zyl
Student number: 8121**

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Supervisor: R.C. Viljoen, DBL

2022



DECLARATION OF AUTHENTICITY

I, Jacqueline van Zyl, declare that the research,

Upliftment of the working poor in South Africa: A competency-building framework

is my own work and that each source of information used has been acknowledged by means of a complete reference in accordance with the Harvard Referencing System. This thesis has not been submitted before for any other research project, degree or examination at any university.



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ABSTRACT

African females have flocked to the South African contract cleaning industry out of desperation for a job [an income]. They form a large part of the poor and working poor severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, elevated levels of unemployment and the low level of education skills required for most contract cleaning jobs enable employers to recruit new employees effortlessly, thereby actively negating the need for skills development for upliftment and impeding the ability of the African female working poor to break the poverty cycle. A relativist-subjectivist ontology and constructivist-interpretivist epistemology were adopted to derive a competency-building framework for uplifting African females in the contract cleaning industry. A constructivist Grounded Theory methodology was adopted. Comparative data were collected and analysed concurrently through personal in-depth interviews (between 12 March 2021 and 13 May 2021) with 22 African females working in the contract cleaning industry. Participants were purposively selected from the employer contract cleaning services database. Rich data was rendered from the interviews. These were compared to the data and themes that from two focus group discussions. The focus groups consisted of with five career progressors and then six company managers and rendered insights on their views about personal, business, and government responsibilities for the upliftment of poor African female working cleaners. The theoretical underpinning was provided by considering the implications of Spiral Dynamics, Karpman's drama triangle and theory on personal authority. Open, axial and theoretical coding was applied as data analysis methods. Triangulating data from the primary research with constructs from the literature review added rigour and congruence to the grounded theory research. The findings indicated that inadequate education and consequent limited skills caused by poor living conditions in their early upbringing reduce African females' work opportunities, ambitions, and career planning towards advancement and emancipation. The absence of adult male figures in households and early (and frequent) pregnancies aggravate female household poverty and dependence on child and pension grants to survive. Moreover, women doing low-wage contract cleaning jobs are not perceived as professional and dignified. Cleaners are unaware of training and lack the knowledge to access information about vacancies and learnerships. In conclusion, the findings indicated that African females could acquire better life and work conditions and more lucrative jobs by empowerment through training programmes and competency building. Conditions are that cleaners accept personal authority for their advancement, seek and apply for training and show their availability and willingness once opportunities arise. Businesses must plan for the (provision) of training and learnerships for competency building. Training and learnerships should be communicated and access to information provided. The government should be responsible for quality education and training of the African female working poor. Job opportunities, internships, and entrepreneurship are vital for economic growth and inclusivity in society. Finally, the research output presents a competency-building framework as a proposal for application in the contract cleaning company, which also served as the research site .It is recommended that the competency framework developed is implemented on the various levels indicated to provide hope for this segment of society that can also be called "the silent industry."

Keywords: Working poverty, contract cleaning, upliftment, competency building, poverty cycle, spiral dynamics, Beige human niche, Purple human niche

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To the silent industry – I hope my work can bring hope to where it is needed most. Thank you for your contribution – often unseen and unacknowledged. *I saw you.*

This thesis is dedicated to the remarkable Catherine Hoyte, activist and promotor of the noble and unsung heroes of the cleaning industry.

I am grateful that she took the time to calibrate my eyes to see the person in the cleaner's uniform: the wife, the mother, the daughter, the sister.

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ABBREVIATIONS, ACRONYMS AND GLOSSARY

ANC	African National Congress
ASGISA	Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa
BCEA	Basic Conditions of Employment Act
BHRC	Business and Human Rights Resource Centre
CCNPF	Contract Cleaning National Provident Fund
CIT	Corporate income tax
CPI	Consumer Price Index
DWCP	Decent Work Country Programme
EHRC	Equality and Human Rights Commission
EI	Emotional intelligence
FET	Further Education and Training
FPL	Food poverty line
GDP	Gross domestic product
GEAR	Growth Employment and Redistribution
HR	Human Resources
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ILOSTAT	International Labour Organisation Department of Statistics
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IT	Information technology
NCCA	National Contract Cleaners' Association
NDP	National Development Plan
NFSA	National Food Security Act
NPL	National Poverty Line
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
PPP	Purchasing power parity

PwC	PricewaterhouseCoopers
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
ROI	Return on investment
ROT	Return on training
RSA	Republic of South Africa
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SA	South Africa(n)
SA	South Africa(n)
SAA	South African Airways
SARS	South African Revenue Service
SASCO	South African Standard Classification of Occupations
SASSA	South African Social Security Agency
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
SME(s)	Small- and Medium-sized Enterprise(s)
SMME(s)	Small-, Medium- and Micro-Enterprise(s)
SPII	Studies in Poverty and Inequality Institute
SRD	Social Relief of Distress
Stats SA	Statistics South Africa
TA	Transactional analysis
UBPL	Upper-bound poverty line
UIF	Unemployment Insurance Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Child Fund
US	United States (of America)
USD	ISO currency code for the US dollar
ZAR	ISO currency code for the South African Rand

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

*No man can be a good citizen unless he has a wage more than sufficient to cover the bare cost of living and hours of labour short enough so after his day's work is done, he will have time and energy to bear his share in the management of the community, to help in carrying the general load —
Theodore Roosevelt, "The New Nationalism". Speech, 01 September 1910.*

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Roosevelt (1910:3-33) first referred to the "working poor" in reference to people who do not earn enough to make a decent living. Typically, these individuals are not called "working poor" but are merely perceived as "poor" by a more affluent society (Vandecasteele & Giesselmann, 2018; Lohmann & Marx, 2018). Rao and Min (2018:231) assert that a *decent living* refers to:

the basic material requirements instrumental [but not sufficient] to achieve physical, and to an extent, social dimensions of human well-being, whether conceived as basic needs or basic capabilities and independent of peoples' values or relative stature in society.

Through the years, paid employment has generally been regarded as the primary means of avoiding lower living standards (Feder, 2019). However, it has become more noticeable that low income, irregular employment and inadequate wages contribute to households not obtaining that "reasonable standard of living" (Cheung & Chou, 2016:318).

As recently as 2018, 8 % of the world's employed population lived in extreme poverty (living on less than USD1.90 purchasing power parity (PPP) per person per day). Sub-Saharan Africa statistics are the most alarming, with around 33 % of the working population (Gammarano, 2019:1; ILO, 2020) earning less than this amount per day. In addition, the COVID-19 crisis has diminished the shared prosperity needed by the most deficient 40 % of the global population, with the forecast that the COVID-19 pandemic and its mutations would add at least another 150 million impoverished people by 2022 (World Bank, 2020a). For South Africa, the financial market and economic conditions are predicted to remain volatile in 2022 and 2023, especially after the orchestrated destruction of infrastructure and looting, which delayed the vaccine rollout and caused a rise in COVID-19 cases in July 2021 (Bishop, 2021). These events influenced the general development of the poor and working poor long after their causes dissolved.

1.1.1 South Africa and poverty

In this research, the focus gravitates towards the life and work conditions of the African female working poor and their upliftment in the South African contract cleaning industry. This chapter introduces the working poor and the poverty cycle in which they are trapped due to not having the required competencies for progress in the labour market. Furthermore, it explains why the

African female working-poor issue in South Africa is so urgent and compelling to research and resolve due to their life conditions and the need for upliftment by the industry and government.

However, despite more than 27 years of democracy [from 1994 to 2021], South Africa's past discriminatory apartheid regime might still be held responsible for a significant divide between the country's people displaying persistently high poverty levels and income inequalities (Lilenstein, Woolard & Leibbrandt, 2018:416). The pre-1994 apartheid lack of quality education, inexperience, and insufficient job opportunities for many African, Coloured, Indian, and Asian societies resulted in substantial poverty and unemployment (Zizzamia, Schotte & Leibbrandt, 2019). Since 1994 the focus of the SA government has been on eradicating poverty and unemployment by creating the maximum number of jobs (UNSD, 2020; UN, 2019). However, this action caused low-wage employment and poverty amongst the working poor to receive less emphasis (Sulla & Zikhali, 2018). As a result, single-adult households run by women increased from 20 % in 2018 to around 36 % of the total unemployment rate in South Africa in the second quarter of 2021 (Stats SA, 2021; Lilenstein *et al.*, 2018; Rogan & Reynolds, 2015). Hence, shared prosperity calls for economic growth to include measures concerning the household consumption and income growth of the most impoverished portion of a population rather than the average development of a country (World Bank, 2021a).

1.1.2 Working poverty in the contract cleaning industry

This research focuses on African female working poverty in the South African contract cleaning industry (which excludes domestic cleaners), generally viewed as a sector where low-skilled marginalised people and vulnerable employment structures overlap (du Toit, 2020; Kaine *et al.*, 2018). In 2014 approximately 100 000 people, mainly women, were employed in the contract cleaning sector in South Africa (NCCA, 2014). With the latest 2016 figures available at the time of research, the number of employees in the building and industrial plant cleaning sector had grown to 176 277. The registered cleaning services industry has generated more than ZAR25 billion per year (Stats SA, 2018). Considering the industry's value, this is in stark contrast with the negotiated minimum wages of contract cleaners on the lowest levels. It is currently calculated at ZAR25.52 per hour for larger metropolitan areas (Area A) and ZAR23.27 for the rest of South Africa (Area C). The applicable rates for Area B are negotiated separately by the KwaZulu-Natal Contract Cleaning Bargaining Council (WageIndicator, 2022).

It is generally accepted that cleaning work requires low expertise and that remuneration is, in most cases, based on the minimum wage with no additional training needed. However, working conditions are often more challenging than being employed in a full-time office job (du Toit, 2020). The cleaning services industry is also characterised by aggressive price rivalry that is aggravated by low barriers for new entrepreneurs and unregistered entrants (Research & Markets, 2020; Kaine *et al.*, 2018). The fierce competition, especially during the COVID-19 period, has placed downward pressure on contract cleaning rates, leading to cost-cutting, shortened work schedules, and larger workloads for cleaners (Schnabel, 2021; Bhorat & Khan, 2018; Kaine *et al.*, 2018). Business Partners have also made an online SME Toolkit available for entrepreneurs to start their own cleaning companies in South Africa. It increases the competitive landscape even further (Business Partners, 2017). Widespread exploitation of cleaners occurs, such as unregistered companies altering their current and new employment contracts, impacting cleaners' earning potential and work security (du Toit, 2020; Kaine *et al.*, 2018).

The researcher has been a general manager in a large cleaning services company for several years. During this time, she experienced the many challenges that the low-wage cleaners faced. While registered and ethical cleaning services companies pay their labour force the wage determined by the respective bargaining councils, they also need to compete with unregistered entities for business from a price-sensitive client base. As a result, limited career development initiatives have been available for the cleaners while there has been a low uptake of learning opportunities. The inadequate opportunities to raise cleaners to a better position and their low commitment to available options lead to low-wage cleaners' inability to break the poverty cycle. These aspects created the desire to study working poverty within the contract cleaning services in South Africa. Particularly exploring the causes of working poverty, how people can break the cycle of poverty, and competencies and mechanisms for uplifting the working poor.

1.1.3 Poverty cycle

The poverty cycle or cycle of poverty is a vicious sequence of events with a firm grip on many South African citizens. The cycle creates its first loop when a child is born into a second-generation low-income family (Charles, 2020). These children inherit little that is economically worthwhile from their poor and deprived grandparents and parents and grow up in households lacking primary resources and having no return on assets. If there is no external intervention, these children are likely to offer their children the same non-inheritance (Concern, 2021). Dubay (2020) then also related the poverty cycle to a phenomenon where families often have limited or no funds for creating opportunities for uplifting any of their members (Banker, Bhanot & Deshpande, 2018). As a result, the family becomes further impoverished and remains stuck in a poverty trap for at least three generations unless an intervention occurs to break out of the predicament (Dubay, 2020).

People who are consistently poor regularly live below the poverty line, even with a fluctuation in their income when finding permanent or temporary work (Concern, 2021). Furthermore, children and people with disabilities depend on their guardians and typically cannot pull themselves out of poverty due to a lack of resources (Charles, 2020). Thus, the consequences of poverty are that the poor, their dependents, and descendants get caught up in a relentless cycle of poverty and denial of inclusion in economic, social, and human development, thus becoming more vulnerable to ill-health and despair (Von Fintel, 2021; Grills, Singh, Pant & Varghese, 2017).

Child poverty's other negative consequences include dental caries, eczema, wheezing, declining pulmonary function, autism spectrum disorders, and low vaccination uptake (Fujiwara *et al.*, 2013; Lynch, 2020). In addition, the long-term impact of child poverty has been determined as a risk of higher functional disability, depression, and dementia amongst adults (Dekhtyar *et al.*, 2015). Figure 1.1 illustrates the different elements in the cycle of poverty that will be debated throughout the study. The figure further displays the most urgent factors to be addressed by businesses and the government in the current South African circumstances. The understanding is that when people are offered upliftment opportunities, they will jump at the chance. However, if they had been in a cycle of poverty all their life, it is hard to imagine escape and upliftment.

We tell people to follow their dreams, but you can only dream of what you can imagine, and, depending on where you come from, your imagination can be quite limited. The highest rung of what's possible is far beyond the world you can see – Trevor Noah, 2016 (online).

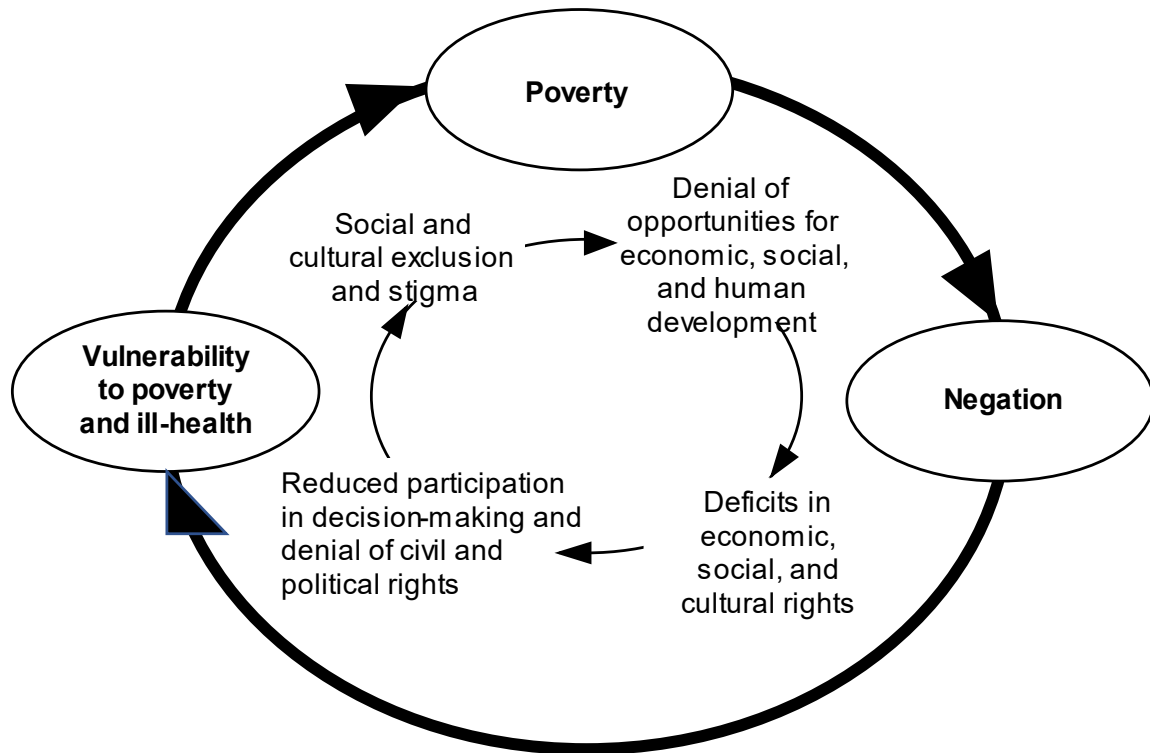


Figure 1.1: Visualising the cycle of poverty
Source: Adapted from Grills *et al.* (2017:38).

The different elements of the poverty cycle are explained in the sequence that they appear in the illustration.

Poverty – The African female enters the contract cleaning services industry with low self-esteem influenced by childhood poverty, considering herself worthless, and exhibiting lower levels of self-care owing to poverty, desperation, and low labour skills (ILO, 2021; Von Fintel, 2021). Chronic poverty has denied her the opportunity to obtain the economic, social, and human development needed for participative decision making and applying her civil and political rights. Consequently, she has experienced social and cultural exclusion and stigma, which makes her increasingly vulnerable to scarcity and ill-health and, once more, negates her development opportunities.

Negation – Cleaning work requires low expertise and labour skills, thus negating the need and opportunity for education and training for a more lucrative job. In addition, low minimum wages trap these women and their dependents in a working poverty cycle, causing them to become more vulnerable to poverty and ill-health (Dubay, 2020).

Vulnerability to poverty and ill-health – drives the inner and outer circles unless help materialises through personal, social, business, or government authority to improve their competencies and break the poverty cycle (Von Fintel, 2021).

The following sections define and contextualise the working poor and working poverty, also called in-work poverty. After that, the research problem will be stated, followed by the research aim, objectives, and research questions. Next, the research philosophy and methodology will be introduced, and the methods for collecting and analysing the primary data will be explained. Finally, a theoretical framework as an introduction to the literature review and the significance of the study will be presented. In conclusion, the study's scope and limitations will be considered, followed by an outline of the chapters.

1.2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The United Nations views poverty as an economic issue and multidimensional phenomenon in today's modern world characterised by unprecedented economic development, technical assets, and financial earnings (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs Poverty Website, 2022). Therefore, poverty is related to either a lack of income, too low an income, a lack of working hours, or too many dependants to afford the essential means for living a dignified life (Filandri & Struffolino, 2018; UN, 2019). Figure 1.1 illustrates that people confronted with poverty typically experience more inadequacies, deficits, and denials that prolong their poverty, not fully realising their human potential. Factors limiting their achievement potential include dangerous and underprivileged working conditions, risky accommodation, lack of nutritious food, limited access to health care, exploitation, and unequal access to justice, amenities, and transport (Gammarano, 2019; Lilenstein *et al.*, 2018). In addition, inadequate education levels strongly influence opportunities for people to participate in the South African labour market. For example, in 1995, people with post-secondary education had a 19.5 % better chance of finding a job than those without the qualification or having obtained a low-level education (Reddy & Mncwango, 2021; Borat & Khan, 2018). However, in 2018, a higher percentage of unemployed adults aged 23 to 38 with a tertiary qualification could be found (9.5 %) compared with the lower unemployment level rate of adults aged 23 to 38 with a tertiary qualification in 2002 (5.6 %) (Stats SA, 2020).

The probability of landing a higher than minimum wage job for a person coming from a poor household with many dependants becomes less because of limited financial opportunities for gaining a decent education (Bhorat & Khan, 2018). Hence, the inference is that without good welfare benefits and a decent job, employment alone is no guarantee against poverty (Bhorat, Lilenstein, Oosthuizen & Thornton, 2016b; ILO, 2020). The introduction to the chapter indicated that poverty and working poverty are global phenomena that have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 labour market shock (Sanai, 2020). The Business and Human Rights Resource Centre (BHRRC) reported in July 2020 that an extra three million people had lost their jobs, of which two million were women, causing more widespread hunger in South Africa (BHRRC, 2020). Social security, one of the mechanisms applied by the government to eradicate poverty and support the working poor, will be discussed in Chapter 3. However, as this study focuses on working poverty in South Africa, it is necessary to define and discuss concepts regarding the poor and working poverty in a larger context before the phenomenon is explored.

1.2.1 Definitions

1.2.1.1 *The poor and poverty*

Poverty has been defined as the exclusion from ordinary life owing to a lack of resources to delineating the poor as those people with low or no income living in inexcusable social conditions (Feder, 2019; Fleury & Fortin, 2006; Halleröd, Ekbrand & Bengtsson, 2015). However, Richardson (2008:19) referred to poverty more accurately as “family resources that are insufficient to ensure adequate housing, health, and educational opportunities.” Poverty may further include isolation, lack of recognition and anticipated culture, limited education, limited learning and specialised skills, and inadequate training and experience prospects (ILO, 2021; Lilenstein *et al.*, 2018).

Most welfare organisations delineate the poor *and poverty by the dimension of absolute and relevant terms or monetary and non-monetary terms* (Gammarano, 2019). For example, the current standard *absolute international poverty line* is calculated at USD 1.90 per person per day (World Bank, 2021a; 2021b). Thus, people are considered extremely poor if household members live on USD 1.90 or less per day. It is about ZAR 14.74 to the USD) per day or ZAR 851.66 per month (Gammarano, 2019; Feder, 2019). The general International Labour Organisation (ILO) has approved the daily amount as an acceptable figure for buying basic food, clothing, and shelter for one person, depending on a fixed income or consumption threshold for the absolute minimum standard of living (ILO, 2020).

In contrast, *relative* poverty lines apply comparative measures of income and consumption to classify or benchmark people as “poor” or “non-poor” against the rest of the country’s population under review (Thiede, Lichter & Slack, 2018). As a result, the poverty line may vary significantly from country to country. For example, the relative poverty line in many countries is set at 60 % of the population’s average income (World Bank, 2020a; 2020b). Poverty and unemployment of people outside the labour force are ascribed to a lack of work or limited employment prospects and an inadequate social security system to keep the poor above the breadline (Gammarano, 2019; UNSD, 2020).

In South Africa, poverty is measured according to three poverty lines (Finn, 2015; Yu, 2019):

- i. Food poverty line or breadline (FPL)
- ii. Lower-bound poverty line (LBPL)
- iii. Upper-bound poverty line (UBPL).

In September 2021, the National Poverty Line (NPL) determined that any person living in South Africa needed at least ZAR 624 per month (ZAR 20.80 per day) to afford the minimum required daily energy intake (Statista, 2021b). This daily food intake cannot be considered a balanced diet, and these amounts need to be revised each year. The amount of ZAR 624 signifies the *extreme food poverty line* (FPL) or breadline in the three different costs of living estimations (Stats SA NPL, 2021). The *lower-bound poverty line* was fixed at ZAR 890 per month (ZAR 29.67 per day). The lower-bound non-food poverty line is estimated by adding the average amount spent on non-food items for those households whose total expenditure is close to the food poverty line. This section of the population must choose between buying groceries and buying electricity. The *upper-bound poverty line* (UPBL) was raised to ZAR 1 335 per month (ZAR 44.50 per person per day) and is, according to Stats SA (2021), the poverty line at which people can purchase both adequate food and other non-food items.

Sadly, the so-called breadline or *extreme* poverty line is still unavailable for many South Africans (Statista, 2021a).

When exploring the *poverty gap*, which indicates the distance away from the poverty line and the severity of poverty, it becomes clear that African female-headed households remain more vulnerable than households headed by males (Horwood *et al.*, 2021; Leibbrandt, Finn & Oosthuizen, 2016). Statistics have indicated that the percentage of women households living below the upper-bound poverty line was, on average, 16.9 % higher than those households run by males (49.9 % women, versus 33.0 % men) (Stats SA, 2020). Furthermore, about six out of every ten homes run by males (59.3 %) compared to more than seven out of every ten households run by females (74.8 %) were living under the UBPL in traditional or rural areas in South Africa (Stats SA, 2020; UN, 2019). Therefore, the inference is that relying on monetary poverty indicators alone is restricting overall rates. Instead, a multidimensional approach, including non-monetary measures, should be applied when evaluating poverty (Haughton & Khandor, 2009). These factors include, amongst other things, access to electricity and water, shelter, health, education and experiencing a sense of self-esteem (Stats SA, 2021; Yu, 2019).

1.2.1.2 Working poverty or in-work poverty

The working poor include individuals who have one or more jobs or keep regular employment but whose income falls below the poverty line owing to low income, insufficient household income, too many dependants and other unforeseen expenses (Feder, 2019; Gautié & Ponthieux, 2016). People are classified as “working poor” when they spend at least 27 days per year working or searching for employment but keep living under the extreme poverty threshold (Sykes, Križ, Edin & Halpern-Meekin, 2015). Hence, the working poor often lives in poverty due to their meagre, inadequate earnings and inferior jobs. It causes difficulties in finding a secure job and safe work environment, saving money, and keeping their sense of self-worth (Feder, 2019; Rao & Min, 2018; Thiede *et al.*, 2018). The correlation between employment and upliftment from poverty depends significantly on how secure decent jobs are in the labour market (ILOSTAT, 2020). Literature has indicated that employment is not an assurance against poverty, seeing that working people are just as vulnerable to poverty as non-working people. Thus, there is a demand for a renewed effort to ensure employment and decent work to increase the likelihood of upliftment of all citizens in need (Filandri & Struffolino, 2018; Gautié & Ponthieux, 2016).

Working poverty or in-work poverty (European term) implies that one or two people collect a low salary while caring for numerous dependants or family members (Brady, Fullerton & Cross, 2014; Feder, 2019). Thus, the household income is inadequate and persistently causes family members to live below the officially recognised poverty line (Cheung & Chou, 2016; Lilenstein *et al.*, 2018). Factors leading to working poverty can be summarised as a combination of low pay at an individual level, low work intensity and income at a household level, and the composition and number of contributors and members in the household (Filandri & Struffolino, 2018; McKnight, Stewart, Himmelweit & Palillo, 2016). In addition, although low pay according to the number of working hours is a risk, working only part-time or part-year and being appointed in a temporary rather than a permanent contract further reduces the earning potential (Bhorat *et al.*, 2016a, 2016b; McKnight *et al.*, 2016).

Research findings have indicated that many South Africans still regard employment as the primary means of escaping poverty (du Toit, 2020; Feder, 2019; Lilenstein *et al.*, 2018). However, social handouts have unfortunately become the only means of support for many poor

and working poor (UN, 2021). These facts will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3. Moreover, South African occupations are still separated and stratified by race and gender (Schotte, Zizzamia & Leibbrandt, 2017). As a result, historically disadvantaged groups are the most likely to suffer from working poverty because many African women take up low-paid jobs while White, Coloured, Indian and Asian women fill higher-paid and more specialised positions (Gradin, 2019; Lilenstein *et al.*, 2018; Schnabel, 2021). As a result, these insecure, less accomplished workers are more likely to become trapped in low-wage careers or drift between low pay and less secure jobs and periods of unemployment, negatively influencing potential employment (McKnight *et al.*, 2016). Furthermore, the impact of working poverty and informal, often troubling work circumstances leads to high anxiety and depression and puts these workers in a particularly vulnerable situation in the South African market (du Toit, 2020; Filandri & Struffolino, 2018; Zizzamia, 2018).

The conclusion is that vulnerable people are often associated with precarious work conditions, such as working in the informal sector, not having a written contract, earning low wages compared to the cost of living, working in adverse conditions, having to travel far to work, not having access to benefits, and having little job security (Bhorat *et al.*, 2016a, 2016b; Feder, 2019; Lilenstein *et al.*, 2018; Zizzamia, 2018). The scope of sharing an income between several household members, together with a high incidence of low-wage employment, could leave even those who do find a temporary or permanent job “unable to work themselves out of poverty at the household level” (Lilenstein *et al.*, 2018:417; Schnabel, 2021). Moreover, even high-wage workers are at risk of falling into poverty if they need to share their income with many non-working dependants or have high household debts to serve (Brewer, 2020; Bhorat *et al.*, 2016a, 2016b).

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

African women are more likely to fall into extreme poverty owing to limited opportunities to occupy the same type of jobs as men and better educated and experienced women in the labour market (Jain, Budlender, Zizzamia & Bassier, 2020; Sulla & Zikhali, 2018). The contract cleaning services industry is overpopulated with African women and, to a lesser degree, other women of colour who are willing to be employed in low-wage and insecure outsourced jobs (Gradin, 2019; Hlatshwayo, 2020). However, limited literature was found on the African female working poor in the contract cleaning industry. Further, how they are educated are underexplored in published research. Over the years, copious international works and statistical reports have been published on poverty and wage inequality, with much less research published on low-wage employment and working poverty in South Africa, especially in the contract cleaning industry. Consequently, information regarding the relationship between low-wage employment, the likelihood of chronic childhood and current working poverty and mechanisms for the upliftment of the working poor to break the poverty cycle is limited.

Moreover, due to the gap in literature of which the researcher is aware, there is a need for research on necessary skills development for the poor, self-upliftment, and poverty reduction amongst the African female working poor in the South African contract cleaning services industry. The research thus focuses on African female working poor contract cleaners and not on the domestic, farm, and other low-paid female workers in South Africa. Therefore, the research problem is stated as

High unemployment and low level of education skills required for most contract cleaning jobs enable employers to recruit new employees effortlessly; actively negating the need for skills development for upliftment of the African female working poor in this sector to break the poverty cycle.

1.4 AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Working closely with African females in the contract cleaning services combined with theoretical assumptions indicated that poor education and childhood poverty may entrap people into a working poverty cycle that they cannot escape without acquiring the appropriate competencies to uplift them in their current circumstances. Therefore, the research aims to

Construct a competency-building framework for the upliftment of the African female working poor contract cleaners in South Africa

The aim is sub-divided into smaller objectives that seek to

- i. Investigate the poor work conditions of the African female working poor contract cleaners in South Africa.
- ii. Explore the learning and career ambitions of the African female working poor contract cleaners in South Africa.
- iii. Critically interrogate the theoretical concepts and constructs relating to the poor and working poor in South Africa.
- iv. Obtain practical insights about the needs and upliftment of the African female working poor contract cleaners in South Africa.
- v. Construct a competency-building framework to enable the upliftment of the African female working poor contract cleaners in South Africa.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main research question aligns with the aim, namely:

What competency-building framework can be constructed for the upliftment of the African female working poor contract cleaners in South Africa?

The sub-questions to be answered are:

- i. How can the work conditions of the African female working poor contract cleaners in South Africa, and the experience thereof, be described?
- ii. What are the learning and career ambitions of the African female working poor contract cleaners in South Africa?
- iii. What are the concepts and constructs relating to the poor and working poor in South Africa?

- iv. What practical insights could be obtained about the needs and upliftment of the African female working poor contract cleaners in South Africa?
- v. What competency-building framework can be constructed to enable the upliftment of the African female working poor contract cleaners in South Africa?

These sub-questions are discussed in the order in which they are listed, namely sub-questions i) and ii) will inform the constructivist grounded theory methodology in Chapter 2. The findings are presented in Chapter 4. Sub-question iii) guided the literature review in Chapter 3, and the findings are presented in Chapter 4. Finally, sub-questions iv) and v) are to be debated in an analytical narrative in Chapter 5.

1.6 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

A belief is adapted that every person has the right to physiological and psychological well-being, safety, and self-esteem. Therefore, the working poor has the right to grow their ability to accomplish upliftment through taking personal authority while drawing on support from current human and social systems. It is the researcher's belief that self-actualisation through personal authority, and self-determination increases individuals' potential to fully develop their abilities and appreciation for life (Maslow, 1970). Hence, the author's philosophical approach to knowledge and knowledge acquisition is explained, and her ontological assumptions are clarified as required from academic research (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Scotland, 2012). The reason is that different theories guide researchers' thought patterns and choices in reaching a contextual and impartial understanding of what is real and known without changing the "essential components" of the self (Darlaston-Jones, 2007:25). The researcher reflects on her role in the research process owing to personal motivations, biases and shortcomings influencing her observations, research methods, reporting, and theorising (Chowdhury, 2019; Fox, 2019). The following sections will highlight the researcher's interpretation of knowledge (ontology), obtaining knowledge (epistemology), her role in the research (axiology), and strategies for acquiring knowledge (methodology) (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; O'Gorman & Mackintosh, 2015).

1.6.1 Ontology

Ontology refers to a specific branch of philosophy and expresses opinions about the nature and structure of reality and the view of the human being in the world (Denzin & Lincoln 2011; Levers, 2013). Ontological assumptions focus on social entities and questions about the existence of facts and objects (what is, what can be known, and how the world works) (Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill & Bristow, 2015; Scotland, 2012). The researcher approached her constructivist grounded theory research from a *relativist paradigm* asserting that facts are proportional to her perspectives and that her theorising is not influenced by the context in which multiple individual realities are assessed (van der Walt, 2020; Bernstein, 2011). Her *subjective approach* to knowledge was shaped by the perceptions and actions that broadly differ between people (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). She applied filters to appreciate the meaning individuals ascribe to people and things in real-world situations, such as kin selection, cultural relativism, and inequality (Lynch, 2019).

Correspondingly, the constructivist grounded theory method adopted for this study was based on subjective truths, methodological underpinnings, and building new knowledge from data (Charmaz, 2006; Charmaz, 2017a; Mills, Bonner & Francis, 2006). *Constructivism* further

refers to the mutual creation of knowledge and understanding (Levers, 2013; Charmaz, 2017a; 2017b), where participants' realities differ, and new theories are co-constructed through the unique cooperation between the researcher and research participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Levers, 2013). Strauss and Corbin (1994:280) opined that

theories are embedded 'in history'—historical epochs, eras and moments are to be considered in the creation, judgment, revision and reformulation of theories.

which, according to Mills *et al.* (2006), positions these authors as relativist pragmatists.

A *pragmatist philosophy* in qualitative research holds that human actions cannot be separated from past experiences and beliefs and that people's thoughts are intrinsically linked to their actions. According to Kaushik and Walsh (2019: 257), a significant assertion of pragmatism is that the meaning of human actions and beliefs can be found in the consequences. Furthermore, people themselves can shape their experiences through their actions and intelligence. These philosophical preconceptions ensured a deep sense of connection with the participants, seemingly less visible on the surface; however, they kindled deep emotions and reactions in the researcher while theorising on the data (Charmaz, 2021; Charmaz & Belgrave, 2019). Pragmatism maintains action and process to investigate problems and circumstances according to explicitly prescribed guidelines (Charmaz, 2017b; Age, 2011). The researcher developed constructivist grounded theory through her pragmatist values when starting her research from the point of great uncertainty. Consequently, practical analytical tools could be applied to help scrutinise events, processes, and theories on the inequality and marginality of the working poor in the pursuit of social justice.

1.6.2 Epistemology

The epistemological paradigm defines the researcher's comprehensive belief system, worldview, and rationale that guides the construction of knowledge (Willis, Jost & Nilakanta, 2007). An epistemological approach is used for gaining adequate knowledge, starting with the research problem, data collection, and data validation (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Saunders *et al.*, 2015). The researcher adopted an interpretivist-constructivist epistemology closely related to her ontology (Hofer & Pintrich, 1997). Epistemological constructivism emphasises the subjective interrelatedness of the researcher and participants in the co-creation of meaning (Mills *et al.*, 2006). Thus, interpreting data is to make sense of the collected data (Van der Walt, 2020) and present an understanding of the research problem (Aldridge, 2018). Such an epistemology seemed the right choice for the research and outcome.

Furthermore, interpretivism as an analytical approach enables the researcher to examine signs and symbols to grasp the meaning of themes hidden in the data (Barrett, 2009). In the process, the researcher listens to her own voice as the scribe, analyst and interpreter, trying to understand the world of human experience through her views, background, and experience (van der Walt, 2020). Secondly, she listens to the voices of her research participants (Thanh & Thanh, 2015), each delivering their own interpretations according to their backgrounds and experiences. Interpretivism requires the researcher to remain open to new ideas for shaping the narrative while including participants' contributions. These elements guide in-depth interviews interactions between the researcher and participants. (Holstein & Gubrium, 2016). Finally, subjectivism accompanies the interpretivist-constructivist method in making sense of knowledge and creating new understanding (Burvill, 2019) to appreciate peoples' behaviour within a particular context (Levers, 2013; Scotland, 2012). Social constructivism is the

integrated approach to creating knowledge through active involvement (McKinley, 2015). Meaning is created while the researcher continuously reflects on social experiences for new knowledge (Saunders *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, the constructivist would emphasise the participants' understanding of terms, situations and events while extracting and coding their assumptions, implicit meanings, and tacit interpretations (Charmaz, 2006).

This study applied an interpretivist-constructivist grounded theory approach in which qualitative critical inquiry supported the method's interactive nature between data that emerge and current literature to construct a framework (Charmaz, 2017a; 2017b). McCall and Edwards (2021) explained that this type of epistemological approach adopted by grounded theorist, is become one of the most prominent qualitative research approaches and is the result of a rigorous step-by-step approach to build new theory. This epistemology allows for a flexible research process to unfold and resist mechanistical approaches. It, therefore, renders a subjective, descriptive theory that is related to the positionality of the study and therefor interprevist of nature (McCall & Edwards, 2021:95). Charmaz also advocated critical inquiry as a pragmatist constructivist grounded theory approach. Pragmatism is embedded in a transformational pattern that seeks to redress forms of ensuing inequality disparities typically found in education and employment (Saunders *et al.*, 2015; Truesdale & Jencks, 2016). Multiple methods were applied to collect data and interpret the present reality. Finally, the themes and patterns of meaning that emerged during the research and analysis process were interpreted and combined to create a new theory.

1.6.3 Axiology

Axiology involves the researcher affirming her role in the research (Heron, 1996) and revealing factors contributing to the situation's intrinsic value (Saunders *et al.*, 2015). Since the researcher played an integral part in the grounded theory process while actively involved in the inquiry, an iterative self-reflection was needed; although it was not easy (Lever, 2013; Suddaby, 2006). To experience a world of working poverty is to participate in people's lived experiences, be actively involved in exploring the phenomenon, and simultaneously mould and encounter the epistemology (O'Gorman & MacIntosh, 2015). A subjective approach and relativist ontology supported abductive reasoning and new theory development. The credibility and rigour of the research process and outcome were confirmed by triangulating the information from different sources. The researcher applied robust research to derive a competency-building framework for uplifting the working poor to function in a demanding and ever-changing world.

1.6.4 Underlying personal principles

Coming from a comparatively affluent working population in the financial services industry, the researcher entered the cleaning industry environment late in her career. Her professional experience supported her belief that most objectives could be achieved given the right level of desire to get things done. The new experience in a world of constraints and minimum wage perspectives was juxtaposed against an earlier worldview where all things were possible. Hence, her ideas stood in stark contrast to an environment of constraints, low-wage workers, and limited perspectives. Having had to face the reality of despair and the loss of hope associated with the challenges some contract cleaners experienced, had been both a spiritual and emotional experience that permanently affected her mindset. Her empathy with an industry where many people can barely secure a dwelling, food and clothing yet are ready to face

another day with a smile resonated with her emerging worldview and influenced her research approach and theorising.

Personal observations of the working poor and the researcher's desire to address the inequalities that sparked her interest in people and business transformation led the researcher to accept the position and role of general manager of business transformation and optimisation. The position required her to deal with internal and external stakeholders within recurring themes of transforming and optimising people and the environment. Subsequently, she increasingly became aware of the challenges that some cleaners faced. Furthermore, these low-wage cleaners conformed to the definitions of working poor discussed in this thesis. It became apparent that mechanisms were needed to build competencies to uplift the working poor in the cleaning services and help them break free from poverty. A subjective approach contributed to the depth of inquiry for the co-construction of knowledge in a developing world still encompassing mass working poverty (Ramalho, Adams, Huggard & Hoare, 2015). Her work-based challenge and research aim were to propel at least some working poor cleaners from their current lived experiences towards better options through deriving a competency-building framework.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.7.1 Introduction

The research methodology defines the strategy for collecting and analysing data for the study based on the aim, objectives, research questions, and underlying philosophical assumptions supporting the research problem (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Guba, 1990). Because the significance of the research depended on a qualitative critical inquiry of working poverty, it seemed important to use a research design comprising qualitative multi-methods to collect rigorous data (Kothari, 2004). As a result, the researcher progressed from knowing very little and not wanting to learn more about poverty and how to collect and analyse data about the phenomenon to becoming interested in and gaining a better understanding of the circumstances of the working poor cleaners. Knowledge could be obtained through a systematic collection and analysis of data while constantly comparing the data with themes that emerge and with literature (Charmaz, 2017b). The research methodology and design are expounded in Chapter 2. Apart from providing the researcher with a blueprint with which to work, the research methodology sections also permit the reader to evaluate the study's trustworthiness and confirmability. Therefore, the research methodology and design are explained in more detail before its application is discussed.

The research design serves as a protocol or detailed plan of action to explain how the information sources would be used, how the construction of knowledge must be acquired, and how the primary data collection and analysis procedures should be applied (Ormston, Spencer, Barnard & Snape, 2013). It further reflects the research choices and decisions that were made at the conceptual stage of the study (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2013) and the methods that were applied towards a solution for the research problem or, in this case, the workplace challenge (O'Gorman & MacIntosh, 2015). Because different research methodologies apply different designs, the "research onion" of Saunders *et al.* (2015) was adapted to illustrate the essence of the research philosophy, strategies, and methods in Figure 1.2. The onion is used as a summary of the different research design choices made.

The outer layer of the research onion containing the ontology, epistemology and axiology was discussed in section 1.6. Successively, the research approach, research strategy, methods, and comparative data collection and analysis of the constructivist grounded theory are expounded in the sections following an illustration of the research onion in Figure 1.2.

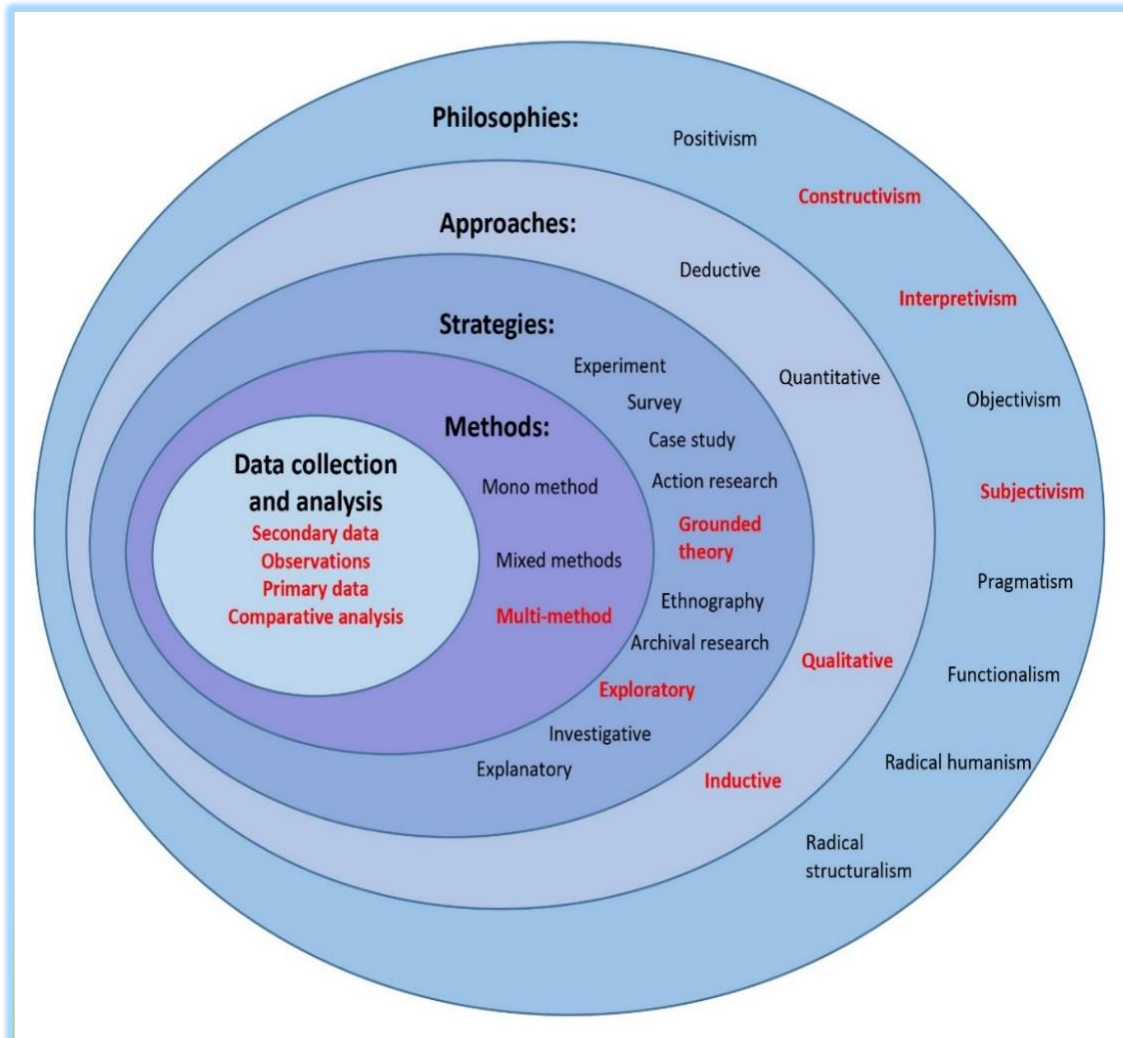


Figure 1.1: Research onion

Source: Adapted from Saunders *et al.* (2015:122).

The research onion in Figure 1.2 explains the layers of the qualitative methodology. Inductive (with abductive and retroductive) reasoning were used within a multi-method data collection strategy. The constructivist grounded theory research collected data through personal in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and observations. Furthermore, the secondary research included literature on the research topic. Finally, comparative data analysis was performed to construct and integrate codes into sub-ordinate and super-ordinate categories for developing new theory and writing an analytic narrative.

1.7.2 Qualitative research approach

Qualitative research is a way of dealing with research questions that investigate the evolution of an understanding of meaning and experience in social systems (Strauss & Corbin 1998). It is important to consider each research participant's subjective meaning, contexts, and behaviour (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The nature of this thesis is therefore qualitative of nature. Exploring and describing the lived experiences of the research participants renders this an appropriate research approach to render rich, descriptive data. Qualitative grounded theory research is typically performed when existing theories do not adequately capture the complexity of the research problem (Creswell, 2013). The significance of a constructivist grounded theory strategy for this study lies in the fact that it (i) provides explicit, sequential guidelines for conducting a qualitative critical inquiry, (ii) offers particular strategies for conducting the analytic phases of inquiry, (iii) structures and integrates data collection and analysis, (iv) enhances conceptual analysis of qualitative data, and (v) validates the research as a systematic inquiry method (Bryant, 2017).

1.7.3 Constructivist grounded theory

Constructivist grounded theory (Figure 1.2) is a qualitative research method for investigating multiple truths and realities (Charmaz, 2017a; Mills *et al.*, 2006). It supports an interpretivist-constructivist paradigm, including a series of descriptions, field notes, memos, interviews, conversations, and recordings while exploring the topic in its natural setting to make sense of the meanings of data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Grounded theory encouraged the researcher to thoroughly read the data, meticulously conduct the coding, and keep improving the precision and scope of the analysis (Charmaz, 2017a). Moreover, constructivist grounded theory engaged the researcher in the research process by inspiring her to raise critical questions while collecting and coding the data into categories (Charmaz, 2017b; Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Consistent with Charmaz and Thornberg (2020), the iterative data engagement and reflection increased the theoretical scope of the research and stimulated the identification of themes and their values.

Selecting a constructivist grounded theory methodology combined with a critical inquiry as a strategy ensured that multiple layers of data could be extracted to develop a theory rooted in participant feedback and observations (Saunders *et al.*, 2015). Three semi-structured interview guides with open questions directed the collection, analysis and comparison of data until the new theory could be developed (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). As a result, the research findings were not reduced to simplistic interpretations. Instead, they uncovered new layers of understanding that informed and explained emerging vital issues on working poverty and competency development (Scotland, 2012). Methodological self-consciousness, theoretical sensitivity, and theoretical sampling and saturation contributed to coding the data acquired from the critical inquiry process.

1.7.4 Research methods

The study applied multiple qualitative research methods to collect information, comprising personal in-depth interviews, two focus group discussions, and participant observations (Saunders *et al.*, 2015). The research scope was obtained by interpreting the participants' perceptions with the field notes, writing memos, and coding the data (Faulkner & Trotter, 2017). The advantage of a multiple-method approach was that data collection, analysis, and theorising could be extended until theoretical saturation was reached (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Urquhart, 2013). Therefore, the research process was only halted once no additional data

could be collected and analysed. As a result, no new themes could be constructed to radically change the category properties (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Saunders *et al.*, 2018), and the theoretical codes permeated into new theory.

The researcher observed the working poor and their circumstances in the cleaning services industry over a lengthy period. Therefore, the most applicable methods to collect research data were applying multiple qualitative methods and a cross-sectional extraction of a list of low-wage female workers from the company's database. Due to dynamic employment circumstances, a lack of research capacity, and time restrictions, data could not be extracted from the database over an extended period (Saunders *et al.*, 2015). The constant comparative analysis formed part of a repetitive collection and theorising process (Charmaz, 2006; Saunders *et al.*, 2015). Abductive reasoning was used throughout the research, during which data were deconstructed, interpreted, and reconstructed into categories and themes (Charmaz, 2017a; Creswell & Poth, 2016; Bryman & Bell, 2015) (section 2.7).

1.7.5 Sample size and sampling techniques

The contract cleaning in South Africa consists of an average of 1500 contract cleaning companies that employ almost 10000 people in 2022 according to a study of the industry that was done by Businesswire (2022). The organisation where the study was conducted employed roughly 14 000 nationally at the time that the study was conducted; with approximately 6 000 contract cleaning workers in the head office in the Gauteng region of the contract cleaning company. The sample was drawn from the 6000 workers in the Gauteng region. The company employed roughly 14 000 clearers at the time of the study. The Gauteng region was selected to ensure that there are a degree of comparison between the life conditions of the workers. Although the company holds a national footprint, each South African region has its unique labour conditions and regulations that are determined by the unions and bargaining councils. For this reason, the study focused only on the company's Gauteng region as the research site, and the interviewing of employees and access to the Gauteng region's cleaning services database were granted (Appendix A).

The purposive random sampling technique was adopted to identify the sample group and develop a systemic way of selecting cases without prior knowledge of the outcome. The sample group is selected on the basis and characteristics of the study (Suri, 2011). As Patton (2002) explained that this approach significantly increases the credibility of research results. The researcher focused on selecting twenty-five African permanent and temporary contract cleaners between 18 years and 60 old. They all earned low wages and worked at the lowest contract levels, as indicated in the company's employee database. In addition, these cleaners had attended little or no education or training to be promoted to a better position or salary. Although 25 cleaners were invited for personal interviews, the final sample consisted of 22 contract cleaners that agreed to participate in the study. These cleaners were invited by email or letters followed by telephone calls to confirm participation in the personal in-depth interviews. Each cleaner first needed to accept the invitation before a personal interview was considered (Appendix B). The invitation explained the nature of the research, the role of the researcher, participant expectations, and the researcher's ethical obligations to the research. Upon receiving their consent, the participants were finally contacted for personal in-depth interviews scheduled at the head office as the research site. More detail follows in paragraph 2.4.

1.7.6 Data collection

Being stationed at the company's head office, the researcher performed her research there for convenience. The researcher conducted 22 in-depth interviews. A semi-structured interview guide containing five open questions was applied to ensure that similar questions were raised and comparable data could be collected. The interview guide can be found in Appendix E. These interviews were transcribed and a summary of these can be seen in Appendix F. The personal in-depth interviews took place in one of the company's formal training rooms under strict COVID-19 regulations and scheduled to prevent participants from meeting on their way to the training room. However, these questions were adapted during the interviews to elicit additional information from the participants. The more the participants opened emotionally and expanded on their life and work conditions, the more the discussions presented rich information on their development years and life and work conditions. Participant observations during the research process were logged by taking field notes that further informed the constant comparative data collection and analysis process. All interviews were recorded and transcribed using Otter.ai¹ software directly after the meetings. A pseudonym and number were allocated to each dataset, and the field notes taken during the personal in-depth interviews were added.

After the personal in-depth interviews, two focus group discussions were arranged with employees in the company (see Appendices C and D). The first focus group discussion (in late May 2021) included five African females who had escaped the working poverty cycle by being promoted to more lucrative jobs due to gaining competencies through education and training. This first focus group met at the head office under strict COVID-19 regulations. The second focus group met in June 2021 via video conference and consisted of six area managers, regional managers, and general managers. Some managers had also been promoted due to their formal education and experience in the company. The interview guide in Appendix D was used for the personal in-depth interviews was adapted to elicit additional data from each focus group or to confirm data already collected and analysed. Both focus groups were requested to suggest practical solutions and recommendations for uplifting the African female working poor in the company.

1.7.7 Data analysis

Data collection and analysis occurred concurrently and iteratively while constantly comparing the data with data. The coding process started with open or initial coding, where participants' verbal statements were extracted from the transcriptions of the recordings. The coding process required repetitively sorting through the data, analysing and categorising the data, and reinforcing the construction of codes, categories, and theory through theoretical sampling. The researcher constantly wrote memos on ideas and reminders about the analysis process and interpretation of the data. In addition, field notes written during the personal in-depth interviews supported the comprehensiveness of the data analysis.

Axial or focused coding refined the initial codes into more abstract concepts and categories. Next, codes were developed and clustered around subcategories and categories. During the process, the codes became more analytical and theoretical until raised to the point of super-ordinate or overarching codes. The theorising and refining of codes continued up to the point when theoretical saturation was reached. The final analysis entailed constructing a new theory from the data and writing the analytical narrative.

¹ Otter.ai downloadable transcription software package for which a subscription is paid: <https://otter.ai/>.

Data from the personal in-depth interview transcriptions were compared and coded and, afterwards, triangulated with the findings from the two focus group discussions. A comprehensive description of the research design, methods, research process and triangulation of data sources ensured trustworthiness, rigour (accuracy and consistency) and congruence (comparability with achievement goals and other studies) (Daumiller & Dresel, 2020). All data sets were anonymised to ensure that no participant would be indicated. Furthermore, no data were kept on site, and digital files were stored on cloud software in a separate secured folder from which the data would be deleted after five years. More detail can be found in chapter 2.

1.7.8 Pilot interviews

Before the personal in-depth interviews commenced, pilot interviews were performed on 12 February 2021 with two African females in the company who were not part of the study. The females' understanding and applicability of the semi-structured interview guide containing open questions could be established by accumulating relevant data on the research phenomenon. The idea was that the questions would still be adapted once actively collecting and analysing data to create meaning within the data. Provisional themes could already be recognised from these females' elaborations on the research questions. Their feedback confirmed that no more than five open questions should be included in a one-hour personal in-depth interview. The field notes with observations logged during the pilot interviews contributed to amending the questions for better insight and emotional support during the interviews. The pilot interviews only partly prepared the researcher for the emotional roller coaster journey she was about to pursue (section 2.4.3).

1.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study's theoretical framework underpinned interdisciplinary research on human psychology, social structures, labour relations, poverty redress, business, and political transformation to create a course of action for uplifting the working poor (Swanson & Chermack, 2013). Seminal works, broader knowledge areas, and global research findings on working poverty were considered to create a uniquely South African perspective on eliminating poverty and uplifting low-wage African female workers in the contract cleaning services industry (CohenMiller & Pate, 2019). Significant theories for the discussion of the topic included Human niches and thinking systems, humans' different responses to stressful conditions, and literature on personal authority, emancipation, and transformation of life conditions. Although different researchers may have selected different theories to address the essence of the research phenomenon, it was decided to focus on Spiral Dynamics, Karpman's Drama Triangle, and literature focusing on personal authority, self-identity, emotional intelligence, and self-esteem.

1.8.1 Spiral dynamics

Spiral Dynamics, which questions man's existence, was developed by Beck and Cowan (1996) from Graves' (1974) initial research on human personality mapping the development of the human psyche. Graves' bio-psychosocial behaviour theory held that human survival depends on "different levels of existence", and people would display behavioural values typical of other humans functioning at a specific level (Graves, 1974:72). Graves opined that it was wrong to assume that human nature is fixed and that there is a single set of values by which people should live. Instead, he revealed that human nature entails an open, continually evolving

integral thinking system that spirals from one state to the next through a hierarchy of ordered systems (Laubscher, 2013).

Beck & Cowan (1996) took Graves' work forward in their theory on the awareness and integral way of thinking that brings understanding and insights on personal development, mastering values, leadership, and transformation (Beck & Cowan, 2014). The relevance of Spiral Dynamics as a theory relies on Beck and his colleagues. They have developed the approach into an integral thinking system model that reflects the dynamic and flowing nature of deep-set human codes in response to life conditions (Beck *et al.*, 2018). Advocating his theory of Spiral Dynamics, Beck was instrumental in influencing decisions on the dismantling of Apartheid and life conditions in South Africa over many years until the eventual peaceful alteration of human values from Apartheid to a democratic South Africa in 1994 (Beck, 2007; Laubscher, 2013).

Therefore, Spiral Dynamics is structured around the idea of people's Value Systems and how people as mature adults can adapt and change to survive different life conditions (Beck *et al.*, 2018; Laubscher, 2013). Furthermore, Graves started his research without a hypothesis and collected data on preconceptions as to what patterns might emerge from the analysis. During his 32 years of research, he thus laid the foundation of a research methodology that Glaser and Strauss (1967) termed "grounded theory". Charmaz (2005) distinguished the qualitative inquiry as constructivist grounded theory, which was applied as the primary research for this study. Spiral Dynamics and people's Value Systems will be discussed in the Literature Review in Chapter 3.

1.8.2 Karpman's Drama Triangle

The "Drama Triangle", also called the "Victim Triangle", was developed by Karpman (1968) as a model of human social interaction, how people think, their roles in dealing with problematic incidences and hurdles and how they expect others to behave. Regrettably, the human system's firm belief in the righteousness of a current set of circumstances may lead to harmful collaborations and deter people from taking liability for creating a better life for themselves and others (Shmelev, 2015). To discover how individuals can opt out of the Drama Triangle and shift the dynamics from drama to empowerment, the researcher had to understand the different roles people adopt and the psychology behind their attitude when entering a drama triangle. Some people enter the Drama Triangle by playing the Victim (**I** must live with it), Persecutor (it is **your** fault, we would not be in this situation if **you** kept your commitments), or the Rescuer (I need to **save** others) (Karpman, 1968, 2007; Aboiron, 2019; Sanai, 2020).

South Africans are currently experiencing personal, social, political, and governmental conflict (Breakfast, 2020). As a result, people are stuck in a drama triangle of blame and locking themselves into rigid, self-satisfying, or self-punishing roles that limit their ability to work towards a collective, social goal and solution (Johnson, 2020). Karpman's Drama Triangle will be linked to the different thinking systems (Beck & Cowan, 2014), problem-solving techniques, personal authority, and dependency on social systems and handouts for sustainable living. Additionally, a detailed discussion of the theory will be linked to mechanisms for a sense of personal authority and self-determination to create competencies for uplifting the working poor. The Drama Triangle will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

1.8.3 Personal authority

Personal authority constitutes finding out what is true for oneself and living according to those truths (Goleman, 1996). Therefore, personal authority can be closely linked to Value Systems,

social behaviour, relationships, and how people think and act out their roles in society and expect others to behave towards them (Williamson, 2002; Orlov, 2020). It is also being respectful of the rights and perspectives of others while exerting control over your own life, body, what you do, how you act, and how you handle other obstacles in life (Hollis, 2020). Orlov maintained that being thoughtful and resolute while simultaneously reaching agreements and getting things done for the eventual common good is better than abject complacency and surrender.

Personal authority requires emotional intelligence (IE), or the ability to recognise, understand, and manage the emotions that are driving behaviour and influencing other people (Goleman, 1996; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). A positive self-concept and personal identity provide a sense of who a person is and how humans consistently change over time. In addition, personal identity and determination are required for improving the self and engaging with family, friends, and co-workers (Olson, 2002). Intricately linked to personal authority, personal identity, and emotional intelligence are concepts of self-determination originally introduced by Deci and Ryan (1985). During the past two decades, institutions have moved their authority to individual authority or motivation for growth and change. Hence, self-determination refers to humans' ability to make choices and manage their lives, which plays a vital role in psychological health and well-being (Cherry, 2021).

The complexity of the research topic and lack of literature on the upliftment of the African female working poor in the cleaning industry in South Africa required these theories to be linked to working poverty, remedy and redress, and African female resilience to derive competencies for their upliftment. Figure 1.3 illustrates the supporting theories and their roles in the literature review. Insights from the Literature Review in Chapter 3 will be triangulated with the findings from the primary research to confirm trustworthiness and congruence.

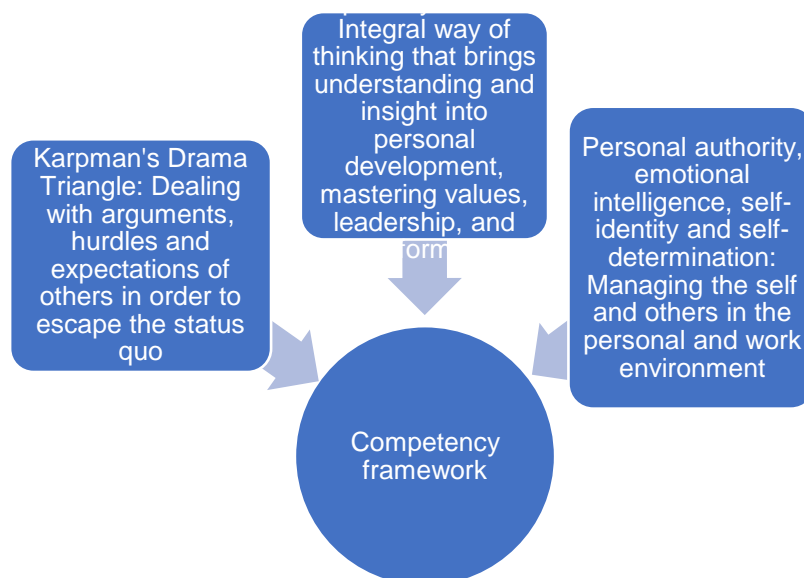


Figure 1.2: Theoretical frameworks

Source: Own compilation.

Figure 1.3 illustrates three theories that introduced the literature review on concepts, such as people thinking and behaviour, working poverty, expectations and redress, taking personal authority, and interventions and upliftment in the contract cleaning industry in South Africa. These theories included Spiral Dynamics, an integral way of beliefs about personal development, how people think, mastering values, leadership, and people and business transformation. Another theory comprised Karpman's Drama Triangle, explaining how to deal with people's arguments, life and work struggles, and the expectations of others. Finally, a discussion on personal authority, emotional intelligence, self-identity and self-determination provided insights on dealing with the self and others in the personal and work environment and acquiring competencies for upliftment in the work environment.

1.9 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study's significance lies in the knowledge gained from grounded theory and secondary research on the emancipation, transformation and optimisation of the African female working poor in the contract cleaning industry in South Africa, its theoretical value, and return on investment for the researcher and the company. Improved knowledge and an understanding of the working poor and upliftment mechanisms may ensure future inclusivity of the poor in decision making, which is integral to equalising the labour market. Furthermore, value-added human resources management and career path planning could lead to more satisfied and confident workers, higher retention of competent cleaners, improved skills application, and a higher return on training investment. Low-wage workers and companies could acquire information on building competencies towards more secure and lucrative jobs in the cleaning services industry.

An essential understanding of human niches and people's thinking systems could support company managers and the development of the African female cleaner in the contract cleaning services industry to build competency, escape the poverty cycle, and confirm personal authority and self-determination. Furthermore, better knowledge and understanding of the upliftment of the working poor could be extrapolated to all South African and international labour markets. In so doing, sufficient awareness and training could lead to more emotionally secure work environments and potentially secure jobs for contract cleaners.

This study's theoretical value lies in the fact that the research findings will supplement current South African knowledge on poverty, redress, and the upliftment of the working poor in the labour market. There is a need for information on the redress of the labour situation and the mutual construction of a competency-building framework explicitly focused on the African female working poor in South Africa. The research could also serve as an evaluation mechanism for small firms, large industries, and the general South African labour market to ensure that they are making progress in uplifting vulnerable African female workers.

The research aims to derive a competency-building framework uplifting the working poor and sustaining the researcher's desire to contribute to the successful transformation and innovative management of a competent cleaning workforce. The knowledge and growth gained from the research will improve her skills and confidence in her current position to drive the company's transformation and optimisation process. The thesis will contribute to the body of knowledge in labour relations, leadership, transformation management and business optimisation, and the redress of the working poor dilemma in South Africa in general.

1.10 DELIMITATIONS AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Delimitations are those facets that limit the research scope, define the research boundaries and specify the extent to which the research problem will be explored (Creswell, 2013). Consequently, these are activities over which the researcher has control. The scope of the research covers interdisciplinary knowledge domains, including business transformation, work optimisation, social inequality, labour relations, competency building, and the upliftment of contract cleaners in the South African political and economic environment. The constructivist grounded theory methodology aims to theorise on themes emerging from the primary research to derive a competency-building framework for the African female working poor. The intent is to help these women to break the poverty cycle and address the poverty dilemma from a South African research perspective.

The data collection was limited to participants selected from the Gauteng contract cleaning company. Although the company has other subsidiaries in South Africa, the decision was to research the topic in the largest entity to limit regional contexts and bargaining regulation differences. In addition, because the researcher is located at the main company office, it seemed more practical to randomly invite a purposively selected sample of participants for personal in-depth interviews at the head office, especially during the COVID-19 restrictions. Most low-wage cleaners did not have the means to participate in a video conference and share their opinions online. Therefore, the interviews had to occur in person while considering COVID-19 health and safety regulations. The first focus group was limited to the head office environment, while the second focus group was in June 2021 via video conference with a management team from the company.

Moreover, the research scope was limited to African female workers in the contract cleaning services selected from its database owing to their low wages and lack of training. Domestic workers were not considered for the research because, although highly vulnerable, these labourers do not fall under the same wage negotiations as stipulated for contract cleaners by the bargaining councils and labour unions. Although observations of the working poor took place over a lengthy period, data from the database were extracted cross-sectionally at a specific point in time. Data were collected from the personal interview participants over two months, commencing in mid-March 2021 and ending in mid-May 2021. These participants shared their life and work conditions through their life stories while also suggesting practical solutions and actions for solving the low-pay dilemma. Limited time, lack of capacity, non-retainment of cleaners at the low minimum wage and harsh circumstances required the primary research to be completed within four months. Nevertheless, the research findings based on the research scope seemed promising as the competency-building framework for the upliftment of the working poor could be extended to the company subsidiaries, labour bodies, and other companies experiencing similar challenges in the cleaning services industry.

1.11 CHAPTER OVERVIEWS

It is important to note that the constructivist grounded theory began with a qualitative critical inquiry to concurrently collect and analyse data from participants through the constant comparative method. Then, after developing an independent analysis, the literature review was conducted and triangulated with the primary research.

Chapter 2: Research Methodology

This chapter focuses on constructivist grounded theory as a qualitative critical inquiry into the participants' perceptions of their early upbringing, education and training, life and work conditions, causal circumstances, financial situations, and aspirations. Multiple methods will be applied for collecting data on the upliftment of the African female working poor in the contract cleaner cleaning industry in South Africa. These methods comprise 22 personal in-depth interviews, two focus group discussions, and personal observations through field notes. Memo writing will support the analytical data coding process. A semi-structured interview guide containing five open questions will confirm the concurrent data collection and analysis of data through the constant comparative method. Theoretical analysis will include initial or open coding, axial or focused coding, and theoretical coding and sampling by selecting and delimiting codes and categories towards a new theory for analytical narrative writing. Finally, research ethics, data integrity, and the research's trustworthiness will be debated.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

A theoretical framework precedes a review of the literature on concepts including social and psychological circumstances of the poor, redress of inequality, and interventions and mechanisms for competency building to uplift the working poor. First, the theoretical framework discusses the theory of Spiral Dynamics, which is structured around peoples' Value Systems and thinking to appreciate the working poor in the labour environment. Second, Karpman's Drama Triangle highlights how people enact their roles and could escape the status quo by moving from drama to empowerment. In addition, personal authority, emotional intelligence, self-identity, and self-determination are discussed to understand people's emotional and behavioural influence on the self and others in the personal and work environment. Finally, the poverty cycle, working poverty, remedy and redress, the social contract, resilience, and mechanisms for building competencies towards uplifting the African female working poor will be discussed.

Chapter 4: Findings

Chapter 4 presents the primary research findings obtained through a constructivist grounded theory, of which the methods and design are described in Chapter 2. Correspondingly, verbatims from 22 personal in-depth interviews and two focus group discussions will be analytically compared and theorised into open codes and axial or focused codes. Next, theoretical coding and sampling will select recurring trends in the data to raise substantive categories into an overarching category to develop a new theory. Subsequently, insights from the literature review in Chapter 3 will be triangulated with the primary research findings to ensure congruence and research rigour.

Chapter 5: Discussion of Findings

This chapter discusses the research findings from Chapter 4 in an analytical narrative that embraces new theory development from the research. The grounded theory aims to define a new theory and modify existing ones to derive an application for addressing working poverty. The analytical narrative highlights causal circumstances for cleaners not having gained the right skills and mechanisms for building competencies and uplifting the African female working poor. Finally, the research findings and recommendations will be integrated into a competency-building framework for uplifting the working poor through personal, business, and government intervention.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations

The concluding chapter summarises the research and its implications. The research problem, aim and objectives are compared and confirmed against the research findings to ensure that they were adequately addressed for the trustworthiness of the grounded theory. Finally, the research contributions will be summarised, and the study's limitations will be highlighted for subsequent future research recommendations.

Whereas Chapter 1 introduced the research context to the reader and provided an overview of the chapters, Chapter 2 will provide a detailed discussion of the methods and design of the constructivist grounded theory applied in this thesis.

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Poverty is not an accident. Like slavery and apartheid, it is man-made and can be removed by the actions of human beings...it always seems impossible until it's done
— Nelson Mandela, 2013 (n.p).

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The reality is that African women are still at a higher risk of dropping into extreme poverty due to not being able to perform the same jobs as men and more educated and skilled females. As a result, these financially poor and desperate women flock to the cleaning services industry to assume low-skilled, minimum-wage and insecure subcontracting jobs. Moreover, the scale of poverty among these females intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research problem is stated as elevated levels of unemployment and the low level of education skills required for most contract cleaning jobs enable employers to recruit new employees effortlessly, thereby actively negating the need for skills development for upliftment and impeding the ability of the African female working poor in this sector to break the poverty cycle. Thus, the research aim was to derive a competency-building framework for the upliftment of the African female working poor in the contract cleaning industry in South Africa.

A search for information has indicated a lack of current research and literature on the African female working poor in the contract cleaning industry concerning their life and work conditions, education, ambitions, and gaining competencies for upliftment. A constructivist-interpretivist epistemology was adopted (section 1.6.2) to confirm the subjective interrelatedness between the researcher and participants in co-creating meaning and addressing the research problem. Consequently, a constructivist grounded theory methodology was employed to elicit information from the cleaners through personal in-depth interviews and stories about life and work conditions, education levels, dreams and ambitions, and how they imagine escaping their circumstances. The study compared their contributions with the findings from a focus group discussion with African females who had progressed in their jobs and a group of company managers concerned with advancing employees. This chapter explores the methodological assumptions and constructivist grounded theory methods used to address the first two sub-questions stated in the introduction to the research (section 1.5).

What are the actual life and work conditions of the African female working poor contract cleaners in South Africa?

What are the learning and career ambitions of the African working poor contract cleaners in South Africa?

Findings from the constructivist grounded theory in this chapter will be presented in Chapter 4 and triangulated with insights from the literature review in Chapter 3. Finally, the findings will be used to construct a new theory for writing the analytical narrative in Chapter 5 and deriving a competency-building framework for the upliftment of the African female working poor.

2.2 METHODOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS

Typically, methodological assumptions are not neutral as they derive from researchers' value positions and contain deeply held beliefs and expectations developed over extended periods (Charmaz, 2017a). However, these fundamental assumptions inform actions in both subtle and noticeable ways (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2019). Therefore, Charmaz advocated developing an intense methodological self-consciousness to scrutinise the long-established individualistic consciousness (Charmaz, 2021). Furthermore, the constructivist grounded theory required the researcher to self-reflect on her undeserved privileges, such as those derived from race, gender, social class, and health (Charmaz, 2020). The following sections will explain the different methodological assumptions that guided the qualitative study, comprising methodological self-consciousness, critical inquiry, and constructivist grounded theory.

2.2.1 Methodological self-consciousness

Methodological self-consciousness combines reflexivity and self-inspection to attach meaning to the data and act positively and decisively towards a resolution (Charmaz, 2014). It further involves considering and analysing the data while engaging in critical inquiry that intensifies the obligation to scrutinise all sources for quality (Charmaz, 2017a). Questions the researcher asked herself during the inquiry process were:

- i. How to find the most relevant participants?
- ii. In which settings to observe, participate, and conduct the research?
- iii. How to write field notes and memos, conduct interviews and focus group discussions, and what multiple texts to select for data analysis?

Additionally, methodological self-consciousness required her to scrutinise her role, position, privileges, and priorities and how to appraise factors affecting the research process and findings (Charmaz, 2017b). She needed to analyse her worldviews, cultural language, and the meanings attached to circumstances to discover how they influence her thinking (Charmaz, 2020). By reflecting on the participants' experiences and work conditions during the research, she became aware of diverse partialities and unearned and undisclosed rights accompanying events, positions, and personalities (Mruck & Mey, 2019). Moreover, reflexivity proved essential for responsible and ethical research practice and trustworthiness (Charmaz, 2020; Bolton, 2012). Subsequently, methodological self-consciousness helped the researcher become aware of her thoughts and attitudes and to what extent her beliefs changed and transformed during the research.

Reflexivity suggests a state of mind that leads the researcher towards insight into situations or things not noticed earlier and identifying when and where detail was overlooked (Mruck & Mey, 2019). Glaser (1978) recommended memo writing as an action to ensure that the researcher retains ideas that could otherwise be lost. However, reflexive reporting does not need to be exhaustive and excessive as it already exists in the researcher's theoretical sensitivity (section 2.2.1.1), which emphasises the self in critical inquiry (Gentles, Jack, Nicholas & McKibbin, 2014). A reflective mind supported the researcher in strategies to question her attitudes, thought processes, values, assumptions, prejudices, and behaviours and understand her role in managing the complexity of the research.

2.2.1.1 *Theoretical sensitivity*

Theoretical sensitivity signifies being sensitive to the underlying meaning and theoretical concepts embedded in the data to find how they relate (Strauss, 1987:300; Gentles *et al.*, 2014). The result was that theoretical sensitivity increased the researcher's understanding of theoretical constructs in the data (Tie, Birks & Francis, 2019). She considered her influence on the participants and how they and their circumstances influenced her thinking. Additionally, she needed to sensitize herself about her influence on the research process, interpretation and analysis process, and the study's influence on her, which was tremendous. Theoretical sensitivity was necessary throughout the research process, from selecting the topic and formulating the questions, conducting the personal in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, collecting, coding, and theorising the data to writing the analytical narrative.

Accordingly, it was important for the researcher to keep in mind that her acquired knowledge was based on interpretations of the participants' life conditions without challenging their realities (Surmiak, 2018). Meaning could only surface through brief observations, covert remarks, and eliciting information through further questioning their stories (Bryant, 2017). For a short while, she experienced connecting with the participants while her thoughts and emotions blended with theirs. Theoretical sensitivity also uncovered intuitive ways of knowing and sensing unspoken meanings (Timonen, Foley & Conlan, 2018). Nonetheless, she stayed aware of her life and worldview, which remained separate from the working poor. To know what it means to survive, not rising above the poverty line, and with little hope of upliftment from their current circumstances, needs somebody who has survived there. Each new code and category needed revisiting the transcriptions to compare and interpret the data. Theoretical sampling supported by field notes and memos continued until a point of theoretical saturation was reached (Figures 2.1 and 2.2).

2.2.1.2 *Theoretical sampling and saturation*

Theoretical sampling relates to comparing and sampling data during the concurrent data collection and analysis process for generating a new theory (Belgrave and Charmaz, 2014). It involves starting with data, forming tentative ideas about the data, and examining and comparing more ideas through critical inquiry (Charmaz, 2006). Hence, the process is theoretically oriented to develop new categories while enhancing and refining categories by collecting and coding more data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; 2012; Tie *et al.*, 2019). Theoretical sampling is aimed at theory construction and is different from sampling participants for population representativeness (Charmaz, 2006:6) (Chapter 2.4). In this case, participant sampling was done through purposive sampling (section 1.7.5. and section 2.4.3).

Theoretical saturation was reached when iterative coding and theorising exhausted the construction of new codes, categories, and theories. Urquhart (2013) and Birks and Mills (2015) relate saturation primarily to the termination of the analysis rather than the conclusion of collecting new data. Charmaz (2006) contends that theoretical saturation is a point where the data fully represents the comprehensive range of constructs that invented the theory.

Categories are "saturated" when gathering fresh data no longer sparks new theoretical insight, nor reveals new properties of these core theoretical categories (Charmaz, 2006:113).

In line with Charmaz (2006), the researcher reached theoretical saturation when she confirmed that no new data would alter the overarching categories and properties, the research findings, and the analytical narrative.

As in Figure 2.1, theoretical sampling required an exploratory sense reinforced by inductive, abductive, and retroductive reasoning. Accordingly, Glaser (1992) posited that inductive reasoning comprises moving from the observed to developing a general abstract description of the characteristics of a particular category. As a result, newly discovered meaning generated insights and observations without engaging with preconceived ideas, concepts, or theories. Charmaz (2014; 2015) similarly linked theoretical sampling to inductive, abductive and retroductive reasoning. The following section explains the reasoning procedures in more detail.

2.2.1.3 *Inductive, deductive, abductive and retroductive logic*

Theoretical reasoning lies at the core of a qualitative research method and decision making as it regulates how humans respond to situations in different facets of their lives (Cramer-Petersen *et al.*, 2019). Timonen *et al.* (2018) stressed the importance of inductive reasoning in grounded theory to understand how to develop data grounded in data. *Inductive reasoning* adopts concepts from available data within a model or frame of reference and goes beyond the premised information to derive plausible conclusions (Cramer-Petersen *et al.*, 2019). *Deductive reasoning* is self-referencing because it allows a decision based on logical inferences from two or more propositions stated to be true (Reichertz, 2010). The constructivist grounded theory applies abductive reasoning to create meaning (Shani & Coghlan, 2020).

Abductive logic purposefully uses features of deductively and inductively generated findings to develop plausible explanations and generate new theory (Edwards *et al.*, 2020:5).

The cyclic instances in Figure 2.1 explain how the researcher applied abductive logic throughout the study.

Abductive logic adopts a pragmatic, iterative approach while moving between open-ended inductive research and hypothetical deductive settings to verify reasons for actions and gaps in the data (Nenonen, Brodie, Storbacka & Peters, 2017). Abductive logic supported the theorising process and helped the researcher understand how it could induce new categories from existing themes. While deriving concepts, frameworks, and theories from the data, the researcher simultaneously formulated explanations for constructing new patterns (Tie *et al.*, 2019). Hence, abductive logic began with participant observations and searching for the most straightforward explanations while experiencing a certain prospect of doubt (Charmaz, 2017a; 2017b). Appropriately, Charmaz (2017a) posited that critical inquiry and constructivist grounded theory drive doubt during the research process. The critical inquiry process started with a feeling of scepticism and relentless uncertainty forcing the theory-building process forward. In contrast, embracing doubt throughout the research helped the researcher sharpen her analytical and theorising skills.

A *retroductive* analytical strategy is linked to abductive logic and distinguishes between theory and data. It implies deliberately and rigorously working backwards and sideways to create a new theory on reasons for known problems (Beighton, 2019). In this study, a combination of inductive, deductive and abductive iterations formed part of the retroductive analytical process (Edwards *et al.*, 2020). Hence, retroductive reasoning is derived from a broader understanding

of collecting and theorising data, starting at the beginning of the research and reflecting on additional concepts throughout the analysis process (Conlon *et al.*, 2020). Retroductive logic shaped a large part of this study's constructivist grounded theory methodology, as explained in Figure 2.1.

2.2.2 Critical inquiry

Critical inquiry begins from an explicit value position that defines the meaning of the research question, in this case, pursuing a cause and intent to advocate and educate in the public domain (Charmaz, 2017b). Abstract notions of survival and injustice become "enacted processes, made real through repetitive actions" (Charmaz, 2005:508). Qualitative critical inquiry is embedded in transformational strategies to seek and redress different forms of disparity and unfairness in a call for dialogue, reflexivity and social participation (Charmaz, 2017b; Denzin, 2017). Accordingly, the researcher applied critical inquiry driven by her relativist and subjectivist ontology. Her interpretivist-constructivist epistemology supported the address of inequality, unfairness and working poverty in a desire to derive a competency-building framework for uplifting the working poor. Her reflexive stance towards her preconceptions, positions and actions reinforced exploring critical questions and encouraged grounded theory strategies (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2019) to answer the research questions.

The qualitative critical inquiry began with defining and contextualising the meaning of the research question before conducting the grounded theory and developing an independent analysis. Afterwards, a literature review explored theoretical concepts on the research phenomenon to compare with the grounded theory. In the process, the researcher created a cause to inform, activate, transform, emancipate, and train those contract cleaners considered the working poor.

2.3 CONSTRUCTIVIST GROUNDED THEORY METHODOLOGY

Charmaz (1939-2020), the developer of constructivist grounded theory, explained the method as abstracting and understanding rather than explaining and predicting. Pragmatist roots shaped the study's methodology, which focused on researching meaning and actions through critical inquiry. Moreover, the method seemed appropriate for eliciting information from the working poor about their life and work conditions as "meanings matter, whether expressed in language or buried in silence and actions can speak without words" (Charmaz, 2017:7). The methodology reinforced the constructivist-interpretivist paradigm with a succession of 22 personal in-depth interviews, two focus group discussions, field notes, and Memoing. Simultaneously, the research explored the topic in its natural setting (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The qualitative research process was enriched by introducing an idea or category and linking it with the research data through abductive and retroductive reasoning (Cramer-Petersen, Christensen & Ahmed-Kristensen, 2019). Moreover, the method prompted the researcher to compare and merge data and categories by constantly creating and refining the data through theoretical sampling.

A pragmatic approach to the constructivist grounded theory (section 1.6.1) further motivated the researcher to thoroughly read the data, meticulously conduct the coding, and improve the precision and scope of analysis by staying involved with the participants in the research process (Charmaz, 2017a). The severity of working poverty encouraged her to raise critical questions from the beginning of the concurrent data collection and analysis process while constantly comparing the data with data (Charmaz, 2017b; Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014). The

iterative engagement and reflexivity of the study contributed to the richness of data while constructing codes and values that might not have been visible before (Charmaz & Thornberg, 2020). It implied the extraction of multiple layers of data to develop a new theory rooted in the perceptions and stories of the working poor. Furthermore, the researcher increased meaning by adding her observations and ideas through field notes and memos. In summary, the pragmatic approach within the constructivist grounded theory and critical inquiry helped her understand the meaning that the working poor attach to their lives and jobs and derive a competency-building framework for their upliftment.

2.4 CONSTRUCTIVIST GROUNDED THEORY DESIGN

2.4.1 Research onion

The research onion (Figure 1.2) illustrates a qualitative subjectivist research approach with critical inquiry and constructivist grounded theory to collect data on the research phenomenon. The researcher's constructivist-interpretivist epistemology served as a filter to appreciate the participant's multiple realities and circumstantial evidence (O'Gorman & MacIntosh, 2015). As a relativist, the researcher assumed no absolute truth except the facts gained through the workers' voices, beliefs, honesty, and sometimes highly emotional contributions.

Accordingly, constructivism required shared knowledge and understanding between the interviewer and participants throughout the research process. Additionally, it required the researcher to remain open to innovative ideas to shape an analytical narrative that contains all voices (Charmaz, 2017a; 2017b). Relativist perceptions remained fluid and subjected to change based on the participants' opinions. Moreover, the researcher stayed an active agent in the research process and acknowledged that her position, privileges, and perspectives would influence the construction of new knowledge (Charmaz, 2014). However, she practised theoretical sensitivity throughout the data collection and analysis process. Finally, her interpretivist-constructivist epistemology challenged her pre-set assumptions about the working poor and their life conditions, work, mechanisms for upliftment, and her assumptions of educating people from different thinking systems. Therefore, she cautioned not to dominate the discussions or ask leading questions (Levers, 2013).

The theorising process embraced the concurrent collection and analysis of qualitative data on the research topic while building a new theory grounded in the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 2006). Data collection was based on open research questions and not on testing hypotheses (Mills *et al.*, 2006). Although the constructivist grounded theory method started with confusion about what data to collect and how it should be collected and analysed, the practical yet flexible critical inquiry guidelines aided the collection and coding of data. The researcher developed theories from the participant engagements (22 personal in-depth interviews and two focus group discussions) and their perceptions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Levers, 2013). Two distinguishing characteristics of constructivist grounded theory classically postulated by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and endorsed by Charmaz (2006) are:

- i. Data collection and analysis happen concurrently and iteratively, and
- ii. Constant comparison of new data with the current data occurs throughout the research process.

Although not always easy, the research followed these directives during the constructivist grounded theory research. In addition, it included a literature review after the primary research for triangulation of all sources of information.

2.4.2 Literature review

The constructivist grounded theory design disregarded a comprehensive literature review until after the primary research and findings. The reason was that the primary research was performed within an actual world of knowledge where data collection and analysis depended on the experiences and contributions of the research participants. Hence, the primary research findings required a literature review to triangulate and confirm the research data. Moreover, the researcher's reflective insights acknowledged her pre-existing learning and experience, which should also be compared with secondary insights from the literature. The literature review considered seminal works and broader research findings on working poverty for a uniquely South African perspective on the upliftment of the African female workers in the contract cleaning industry in the country.

Internal management discussions, company documents, bargaining council member discussions, and business area regulations supplemented the secondary research findings. First, a discussion of a theoretical framework as an introduction to the literature review focused on Spiral dynamics and especially human niches as described by Laubscher (2013). Depending on the author mentioned the concepts of vMemos, value systems, human niches and thinking structures are used interchangeably. As the contribution of Laubscher (2013) and Laubscher and Viljoen (2022) reconceptualised the two thinking systems that informs the study most, special care was taken to anchor these parts in the most recent terminology, namely human niches. Next, a debate on Karpman's Drama Triangle explained people's responses to stressful circumstances, how they might change, and how they could escape the drama triangle. Furthermore, a debate on human psychology and social structures provided insights on personal authority, self-identity, emotional intelligence, and self-esteem (section 1.8). Finally, these theories introduced a literature review on poverty and dignity, inequality, redress, resilience, accepting personal, business, and government responsibility for building competency and uplifting the working poor (Chapter 3).

2.4.3 Pilot interviews

Although not typical in grounded theory, the researcher performed pilot interviews on 12 February 2021 with two African female cleaners in the company, who were similar to the sample population but were not part of the data collection (Bryman, 2016). The pilot interviews were to ensure that accurate and relevant data would be collected from the sample population. Thus, the pilot study signified a small-scale research project performed via semi-structured personal interviews before the full-scale study commenced. It aided the researcher to establish how likely the research process would work and how the research questions should be adapted for the cleaners to understand and provide correct information (Ismail, Kinchin & Edwards, 2018:2) (section 1.7.8). The pilot interviews further supported the researcher in pacing the discussion, using a conversational tone, and establishing commonalities, rapport, and trust with the participants (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). Thus, piloting the semi-structured interview guide with open questions played a significant role in ensuring that the instrument served its purpose in a poorly educated community. Simultaneously, the researcher could change and enhance the open questions before and during the interviews and two focus group discussions and still follow the constructivist grounded theory's iterative theorising process.

Through active data collection, analysis, and coding, the researcher could repeatedly ask new questions and define meanings within the data.

2.4.4 Population and sampling strategy

The research environment comprised a contract cleaning company in the Gauteng region comprising approximately 6 000 cleaners. Because the cleaning company has a national footprint and operates in different areas and regions, different bargaining councils determine the minimum hourly wages for cleaners. The researcher's title role is General Manager of Business Transformation and Optimisation. Therefore, her research focused on interviewing the working poor contract cleaners in the Gauteng region about their life and work conditions, training, education, and promotion opportunities. She received approval to interview these cleaners and other employees as part of her research (Appendix A). In addition, the company allowed the researcher access to extract data from the company cleaner database.

The study followed a qualitative non-probability sampling technique, namely purposive sampling, as the most suitable method to select a sample of low-wage cleaners from the company population. Purposive or subjective sampling was done according to the researcher's judgement of the most suitable participants (Saunders *et al.*, 2015) and how to collect the most relevant data (Creswell, 2013). These criteria included where the personal in-depth interviews would be performed, who the research participants would be, how to conduct the interviews, and what questions to ask. As a non-probability sampling technique, purposive sampling required no statistical measures to select cleaners as participants. Therefore, it appeared convenient because a sample of twenty-five cleaners containing specific demographic and personal characteristics could be randomly selected.

Twenty-two of the twenty-five invited permanent and temporary African females of age 18 years to 60 participated in the personal in-depth interviews. Three invitees did not want to participate in the study. In addition, these three cleaners had not attended formal company training or gained tertiary certification in support of a promotion. As a result, these female cleaners were trapped in their current life conditions and positions in the company. Notably, the research sample did not represent the company's entire low-wage population. Only personally invited participants who accepted the invitations and were willing to participate were included in the research (Appendix B).

Moreover, the researcher explicitly selected participants to collect and construct knowledge about the research phenomenon, discover workable solutions to working poverty, and recommend ways to uplift the company's working poor. She carefully considered the questions and adapted the questions during the personal in-depth interviews where necessary. Although low wages and difficult life conditions were a reality, not all workers could identify themselves as working poor and suggest ways to uplift the working poor. However, most participants wanted training to acquire additional competencies. The researcher assumed no actual sample size until after the data collection and analysis had reached a point of theoretical saturation (section 2.2.1.2).

2.5 CONSTRUCTIVIST GROUNDED THEORY OUTLINE

Before undertaking the constructivist grounded theory research, the researcher had to face the challenge of understanding the research process by deconstructing the essential elements and combining these into a well-developed outline for a functional *modus operandi*. Figure 2.1

illustrates the meticulous interplay and movement between methods and processes that reinforce theory construction through data analysis. As the outline indicates, constructivist grounded theory research does not follow a linear approach. Instead, the process is iterative and persistent and needs theoretical sensitivity and reflexivity while viewing the world through a particular lens. The strategy commenced with purposive sampling of the participants. After that, theoretical data sampling followed (see steps in Figure 2.1) until theoretical saturation was reached. Finally, a new theory was developed to write the analytical narrative grounded in data. After the illustration, the various steps followed during the constructivist grounded theory will be discussed.

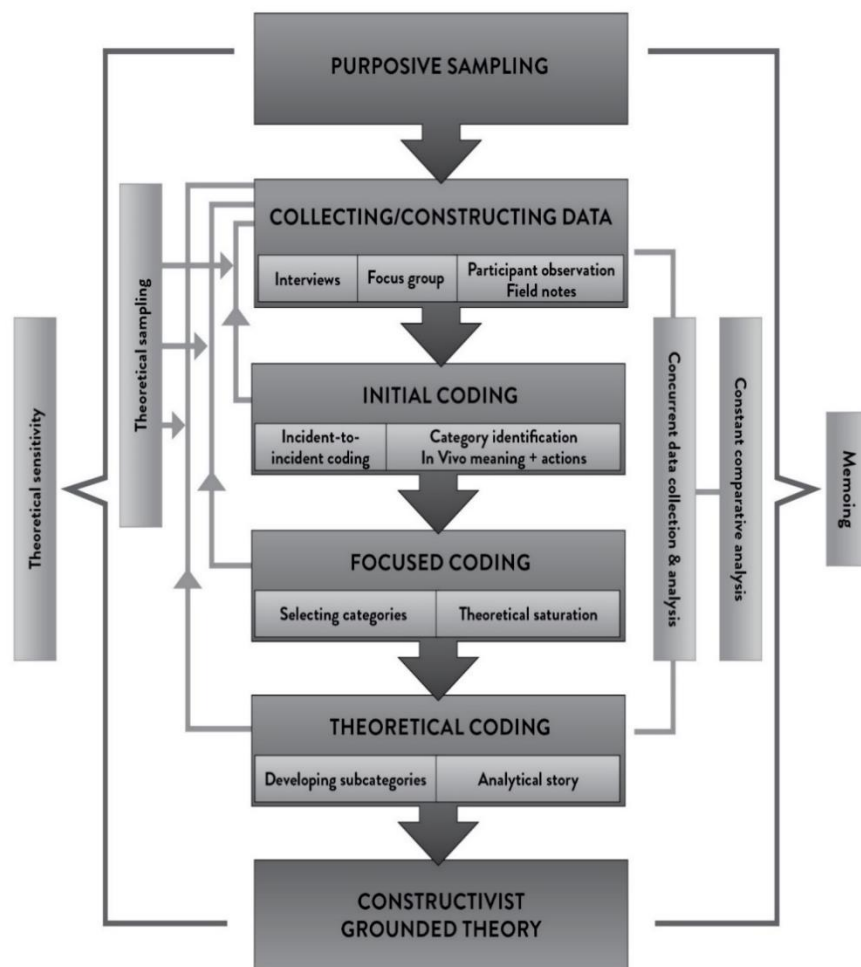


Figure 2.1: Constructivist grounded theory outline
Source: Adapted from Tie *et al.* (2019:3).

2.6 COLLECTING DATA

Figure 2.1 illustrates the back and forth (abductive) and sideways (retroductive) movement between processes and theorising underpinning the constructivist grounded theory. This figure demonstrates the iterative, recursive, and complex procedures. Before drafting the research methodology and design, the researcher, as a novice, had spent four months studying and understanding the different concepts, meanings, and actions. Theoretical sensitivity and iterative theoretical sampling (see section 2.2.1.1 and section 2.2.1.1) illustrated on the left signify reflexivity in the data collection and analysis, coding, and theorising. On the right, memoing supports constant data collection and analysis and comparative content analysis. Memoing will be discussed in section 2.6.3. The personal in-depth interviews were conducted in a three-month period from February 2021 to May 2021. The two focus groups were conducted in May and June 2021.

2.6.1 Personal in-depth interviews

The personal in-depth interview is a directed conversation in which rigorous exchanges permit exploring a particular topic or experience between the interviewer and interviewee (Saunders *et al.*, 2015:312). Rutledge and Hogg (2020) described an in-depth interview as a type of qualitative research technique that can be applied to provide detailed information with a small sample group. The open-ended nature thereof results in rich data that are discovered and can support a researcher to explore experiences, feelings and associate meanings of the research participants. During the interviews participants shared information about their growing-up years, causal circumstances for not acquiring adequate education and skills, life and work conditions, and ambitions for advancement.

According to Charmaz (2014) and Timonen *et al.* (2018), constructivist grounded theory-based personal in-depth interviews and focus group discussions require the researcher to investigate how the context shapes the key events, incidents, and behaviours. Participant demographics were cross-sectionally extracted from the database (section 1.7.4). The researcher invested time and interest in the participants' perceptions, stories, and experiences for her research and role as manager in the company. Because the questions explored sensitive issues, the researcher needed to build a trusting relationship with the participants to ensure that they were comfortable telling their stories and that the narratives presented an image of their reality.

The researcher conducted personal in-depth interviews with each of the 22 participants in a company training room. It was impossible to arrange interviews via video conference as the cleaners did not have offices or technical facilities. At first, the personal in-depth interviews started less structured to set a reassuring environment before the researcher started asking the questions. Afterwards, the questions and conversations focused on understanding the complexities emerging from the participants' stories (Conlon, Carney, Timonen & Scharf, 2015). To construct meaning from the data, the researcher had to ask herself, "What is going on here?", "What are the major patterns?" and "What explains them?" (Timonen *et al.*, 2018:6). These questions guided the researcher with the theorising and memoing process. The invitation letter for the interviews can be found in Appendix B and the interview guide in Appendix E.

2.6.1.1 Data collection instruments

A semi-structured interview guide (Appendix E) with open questions ensured participants' responses to the questions. Additional questions were necessary to elaborate on their stories,

perceptions, opinions, and life conditions. Furthermore, the questions from the interview guide could be adapted to confirm data with the focus group containing career path progressors. This way, the researcher elicited additional information on causal circumstances for being trapped in the poverty cycle, and what personal changes could be made to move to better positions in the company. The interview guide could be further adapted for a discussion with the focus group containing advancers or impactors on progress in the company. They contributed insights and ideas on what they expect from the cleaners in their jobs, mechanisms for competency building and how the business and government could be actively involved in the upliftment of the working poor.

2.6.1.2 Participant observations and field notes

De Walt and De Walt (2011:1) assert participant observation as a method in which

the researcher takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions, and events of a group of people to learn the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and culture.

Although the definition focuses more on ethnographic research, the researcher could also observe the African females in their daily jobs. It made it easier to record her observations on the participants' body language, emotions, voice tone, physical context, and the non-verbal communication behind their stories. Thus, observations would not be data unless recorded in field notes for further analysis (Clifford, 2019). The field notes were compared and expanded with the transcriptions directly after the interviews to ensure no vital information was omitted. Furthermore, the field notes served as a subjective representation of the researcher's perceptions and opinions (Phillippe & Lauderdale, 2018). As a whole, it made sense to add these notes to each participant's dataset.

The researcher expressed interest in the participants and their emotions and offered them her undivided attention without expressing her thoughts and attitudes. Furthermore, the participants continually needed affirmation and understanding while sharing their experiences and opinions. Although both the interviewer and participants were women, class, age, race, and ethnic differences still influenced perceptions and understanding during the interview process. Therefore, the interviewer constantly reflected on her own feelings, biases, and philosophical approaches. Participant responses ranged from informative and emotional to showing discomfort, pain and overburden. The topic, connotations, life conditions, and interviewing skills affected how the cleaners experienced their respective interviews. At the end of each interview, the participants expressed their relief and gratitude that could articulate their feelings.

In summary, personal in-depth interviews required thoroughly eliciting information from each participant on their life and work experiences, perceptions, and aspirations while taking field notes on their non-verbal communication, which included the significance of silences during the discussions. In addition, memos in which the researcher reflected on her opinions and decisions about the collected data were written throughout the research process (see 2.7.3).

2.6.1.3 Transcribing the recorded interviews

The personal in-depth interviews were recorded and transcribed using Otter transcription software (see 1.7.6), and each dataset was labelled anonymously. Transcribing the data did

not simply mean (re)producing accurate transcripts but communicating the participants' inner voices naturally and credibly (Widodo, 2014). Data analysis started with the verbal data, which helped the researcher detect what themes should be further examined and categorised while writing memos about the data and actions. Next, she reflected on each transcription and combined these with her field notes. The process involved iterative listening, more focused writing, iterative writing, and reflecting on the transcriptions and data. All data and processes were managed with confidentiality. Each participant received a pseudonym and a number during the interviews, and the transcriptions with field notes were allocated the same number. The researcher saved all text in a locked cabinet while digital data were saved in a separate folder in cloud technology. Only she knows the password.

2.6.2 Focus group discussions

In an effort to explore the views of management two focus groups were conducted to incorporate the view of management. Similar processes and ethical standards were followed to treat data collected from the two focus group meetings. A focus group discussion is a group interview where participants openly debate questions and statements around a particular situation or event relevant to the phenomenon (Babbie, 2013). Thus, the questions were adapted for comparative data collection and analysis, which differed from the personal in-depth interviews. The focus group participants simultaneously shared their ideas, discussed issues, posed their comments and explanations, disagreed, and recommended workable solutions to the topic under discussion in a safe environment. Moreover, during the focus group discussions, the participants shared experiences and voiced opinions that did not surface during the personal in-depth interviews (Barbour, 2018). As a result, the focus group discussions generated broader insights into the research phenomenon.

2.6.2.1 Focus Group 1 – Career path progressors

Focus Group 1 contained five career-path progressors from the company and it took place in late May 2021. The group included a supervisor, area manager, receptionist, trainer, and administrator who had progressed from a low-skilled cleaner level up the company ladder to a better position due to their education and training, leadership skills, and acquired competencies. The focus group discussion was guided by the same interview guide used during the personal in-depth interviews with the advantage that questions could be adapted to gather additional information or gain more clarity on concepts (Appendix E). The researcher requested the participants to recommend practical solutions to issues that they had experienced around the cleaning jobs, training, and the upliftment of the working poor. She managed the flow of the discussion while also encouraging open conversations to enrich the personal in-depth interview data.

A female assistant recorded the focus group discussion and added field notes for comprehension. She was briefed beforehand on the research problem, aim, and objectives and understood the focus group discussion and reporting process. Afterwards, the researcher and assistant confirmed and compared field notes and added these to the transcriptions of the recording. Opinions and recommendations from Focus Group 1 added to the comprehensiveness of the personal in-depth interview data. Participants mutually contributed towards deriving a competency-building framework for the upliftment of the working poor. Being an active participant in the focus group discussion, the researcher remained methodologically conscious not to influence the participants' perceptions and interpretations of the questions or steer their opinions towards a mutual solution or outcome.

2.6.2.2 Focus Group 2 – Career advancers or impactors on progress

Focus Group 2 took place in June 2021. It included six participants from the senior management level, comprising an industrial relations manager with a seat on the bargaining council, the head of health-care centres and contracts, the head of the centre of excellence, the head of operations, and two area managers. The interview guide with five questions (Appendix E) was adapted and emailed to them beforehand for their input and discussion during the focus group meeting. This focus group discussion was conducted via video conference, and the discussions were recorded and noted. As with the previous interviews and discussions, the focus group participants were probed for their opinions about the working poor in the company and what the cleaners, company, and government could do towards uplifting these African female cleaners.

The objective was to compare and supplement the personal in-depth interview findings with the findings from Focus Group 1 and substantiate the data with informed knowledge from senior company members who participated in the Focus Group 2 discussion. Therefore, the study's trustworthiness depended partly on whether another researcher could perform similar research and obtain approximately a similar outcome. The interview guide with core questions is attached as Appendix E. The sources were compared and kept confidential, and data were captured and analysed in a non-judgemental way to ensure research rigour and congruence.

2.7 DATA ANALYSIS AND CODING

This section explains the constructivist grounded theory coding and theorising process as indicated in Figure 2.1. Charmaz (2015) opines that the significance of constructivist grounded theory and qualitative critical inquiry resides in their interactive nature, also illustrated in Figure 2.1. The researcher carefully read the data while constantly improving the precision and scope of the analysis. Furthermore, the constructivist grounded theory method kept the researcher involved by raising critical questions from the beginning of concurrent data collection and analysis to theorising the codes and writing the analytical narrative (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014). Participant engagement improved the theoretical scope of the research for the construction and appraisal of themes that otherwise might have gone unnoticed (Charmaz, 2015). The following sections define and contextualise the different research concepts before explaining their application.

2.7.1 Concurrent data collection and analysis

The call for concurrent data collection and analysis has become louder as constructivist grounded theory evolved over the past years. It supported the researcher in constructing new theories through abductive and retroductive reasoning while collecting, coding and theorising the data (Charmaz, 2017a; Timonen *et al.*, 2018). With constant data comparison and the researcher's pragmatic strategy (section 1.6.1), critical inquiry supported the constructivist grounded theory widely adopted for its qualitative nature and iterative processes (Charmaz, 2006; Charmaz & Thornberg, 2020; Saunders *et al.*, 2015). Hence, while eliciting participant information, the researcher deconstructed, interpreted, and reconstructed data by theorising the codes and discovering patterns of meaning sorted into sub-ordinate and super-ordinate categories.

Moreover, the 22 personal in-depth interviews and two focus group discussions provided structure for developing concepts and a broader perspective on the research phenomenon. Apart from collecting the most relevant data, Saunders *et al.* (2015) endorsed the constant

omission, alteration, and accumulation of questions according to the required content and data for theorising on the research topic. Accordingly, the five questions were continually altered and enhanced to collect and compare data according to new insights. Theorising and coding data needed confirmation with experts in the company's human resources management, business relations, and business operations departments to create a new theory and an applicable competency-building framework for uplifting the working poor.

However, the concurrent data collection and analysis strategy did not materialise without issues. Owing to the large amount of data collected from the 22 personal in-depth interviews and two focus group discussions, the researcher found it hard to collect and compare data while creating new codes. Because of COVID-19 regulations, travel arrangements, and ongoing job obligations, the participants' unavailability contributed to the researcher's anxiety and lack of confidence during the earlier data collection and analysis stages. It often required her merely to continue with the fieldwork when the opportunity presented itself, regardless of whether time allowed the transcription of interviews and focus group recordings and the constant comparison and analysis of data. The more experience she obtained, the easier the process became.

Furthermore, pursuing a constructivist grounded theory process required tracking emergent issues and gathering data from various sources, including institutional records, public policy statements, and follow-up discussions with participants and experts in the research field (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014). Critical inquiry and the constructivist grounded theory illustrated in Figure 2.1 guided the research process during this period. Qualitative critical inquiry offered an open-ended, in-depth study of working poverty and redress by appreciating the participants' worlds and experiences while constantly creating new insights. The researcher immediately pursued ideas and issues that developed during the personal in-depth interviews to understand a particular Human niche or thinking system (Charmaz, 2006; Laubscher, 2013). Therefore, the process required reflexivity and constantly theorising about the data while creating meaning.

2.7.2 Constant comparative method

A constructivist grounded theory requires multiple stages of data analysis for refining and coding the data until theoretical saturation is reached (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The constant comparative method made it possible for the researcher to structure data into groups and categories and theorise and formulate a new theory grounded in data, applying methodological self-consciousness (section 2.2.1) (Kolb, 2012). The first step was to compare data with data and find similarities and differences (variation) between situations (context) and the consequences surrounding key events, incidents, and patterns (Timonen *et al.*, 2018). Throughout the process, the objective was to make sense of the data, challenge the researcher's opinion about the connections between codes, and create categories to connect codes.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) opined that the constant comparative method combines four stages:

- i. Comparing incidents (incident-to-incident coding).
- ii. Integrating categories and their properties.
- iii. Delimiting the theory, and
- iv. Writing new theory.

These four stages required repetitively sorting through the collected data, analysing and coding the data, and reinforcing the construction of theory by applying theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2006). Thus, as noted in Figure 2.1 and Figure 2.2, the constructivist grounded theory did not entail lateral thinking but a continual reflective cycle of concurrent data collection and analysis, constant comparative analysis, theoretical sampling and coding, and memos containing ideas about events and data.

2.7.3 Memoing

Memos are concurrent thought processes at a given stage and enable the researcher to remember what opinions she held and why she had decided something at a particular time (Birks, 2008:98; Timonen *et al.*, 2018). Memoing is an essential and core component of constructivist grounded theory analysis (Charmaz & Thornberg, 2020). The researcher made reflective notes about what she could remember from the data collection process or wrote statements regarding a category, its properties, and the relationships between categories (Tie *et al.*, 2019; Kolb, 2012). The memoing process further included theorising on substantive codes and their relationships. Research arguments and theorising were compared against data, requiring reflexivity and methodological self-consciousness (Timonen *et al.*, 2018). These actions caused the constructivist grounded theory to be a highly iterative process of developing core concepts and theory through multiple sequences (Figure 2.2).

Furthermore, memoing began at the onset of the research as it prompted the researcher to elaborate on processes, assumptions, and actions while applying coding and building categories. Memoing also helped the researcher to initiate and maintain productivity during uncertain times. Charmaz (2006) signified the practical application of memos as i) sorting, comparing and integrating memos by their category label, ii) comparing categories, iii) considering how the category order reflects the studied experiences, iv) reasoning whether category order fits the logic, and v) creating the best possible balance between the considered experiences, the constructed categories, and theoretical statements. In line with Charmaz (2006), Järvinen and Mik-Meyer (2020) listed eight activities of memoing that clarified the process, namely:

- i. Defining each code or category according to its analytic properties.
- ii. Spelling out and detailing processes incorporating the codes and categories.
- iii. Drawing comparisons between data and data, data and codes, codes and codes, codes and categories, and categories and categories.
- iv. Bringing raw data into the memo.
- v. Providing sufficient practical evidence to support the definitions of a category and analytic claims about it.
- vi. Providing inferences to check the field setting(s).
- vii. Identifying gaps in the analysis.
- viii. Questioning a code or category by asking more questions (Järvinen & Mik-Meyer, 2020).

Memos were combined with the transcriptions and field notes (Chapter 4) to support the data analysis and obtain additional data. However, while the transcripts (in vivo data) and field notes were incorporated into the memos, the reverse is rarely possible (Charmaz & Thornberg, 2020; Birks *et al.*, 2008). Thus, memoing was an analytical strategy to assist theoretical sampling while the researcher remained true to the data for a critical review and comparison (Charmaz, 2006). In addition, memoing enabled the researcher to flag incomplete categories and gaps in

the analysis (Birks *et al.*, 2008). In conjunction with theoretical sampling, writing memos encouraged the researcher to predict where and how to find additional data to fill information gaps and saturate the categories.

Because the researcher started the primary research from a place of insecurity, the memos in Chapter 4 included private conversations with herself. They served as reminders for her and the reader regarding the flow of the research. Furthermore, memos stimulated her ideas on theorising and enhancing codes, creating and scrutinising assumptions, and expressing doubts during the coding process (Giles *et al.*, 2016). These memos served as a vehicle to carry the researcher from the concrete to the conceptual while supporting theoretical sensitivity and reflexivity (section 2.3.1.1). Because memos are essential for constructivist grounded theory but difficult for the novice researcher to understand, Figure 2.2 was constructed to illustrate the cyclical (iterative) memoing process during the concurrent data collection and analysis while constantly comparing data for theory building.

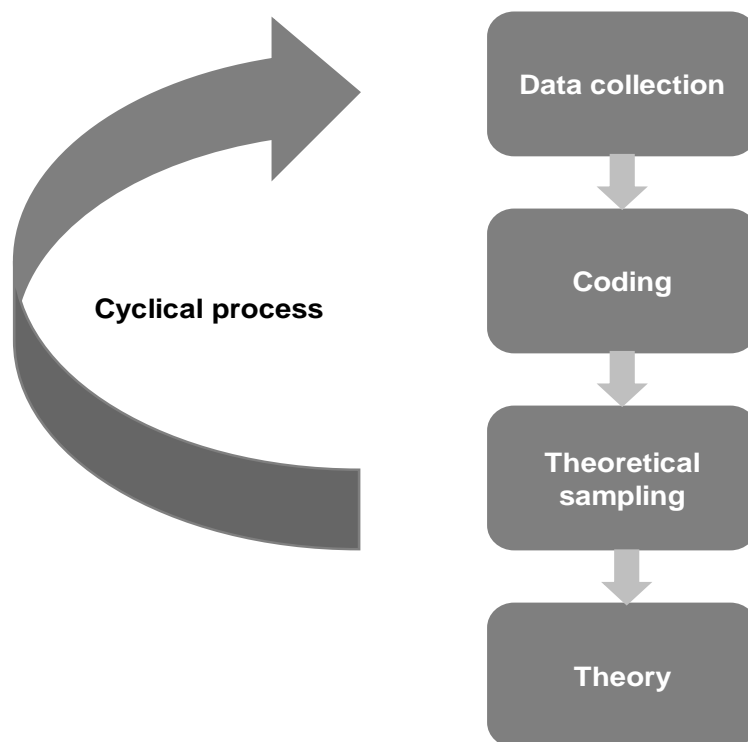


Figure 2.2: Cyclical processes of the constant comparative method and memoing

Source: Own compilation.

Figure 2.2 illustrates the cyclical memoing process in the constant comparative method. Memoing was continually applied during data collection, analysis and coding, of which the different stages are detailed in the following sections.

2.8 DATA CODING AND THEORISING

A discussion on the data analysis and coding process in grounded theory clarifies the distinct phases of breaking down the data into themes and categories described by Corbin and Strauss (1990:96) as i) open coding, ii) axial coding, and iii) selective coding. Their idea was to create a complete picture of information obtained through concurrent data collection and analysis. Charmaz (2006) labelled the same phases in constructivist grounded theory as i) initial coding, ii) focused coding, and iii) theoretical coding.

Coding embraces comparative data analysis, memoing, theoretical sampling, and theory building. This study followed the constructivist grounded theory strategy founded by Charmaz (1939-2020), which differs from that of Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Corbin and Strauss (1990). Her view was that researchers should be actively involved in constructing codes and categories for building theory rather than allowing themes to emerge from the data (Charmaz, 2017a). Kolb's (2012:84) description of the grounded theory and constant comparative method of Strauss and Corbin (1990) are quoted for more clarity:

During the first phase of the open coding process, the researcher compares data with data and repeatedly asks questions about what is and is not understood. Then, different categories, properties, and concepts within and among the data can be identified by various methods that systematically examine parts or the whole dataset.

The following coding step concerns the axial coding procedure. Data are pieced together in new ways after open coding, allowing connections between categories. The main emphasis of axial coding is continually asking questions and making comparisons using inductive and deductive thinking to relate subcategories to a category. Strauss and Corbin (1998) labelled selective coding as the final stage of the coding process of i) identifying and choosing the core category, ii) systematically connecting it to other categories, iii) validating those similarities and relationships, and then iv) completing categories that need further refinement and development (Kolb, 2012:84). It was only after the decisive process of integrating, weaving, refining, and selecting sub-ordinate categories that a core or overarching category emerged through theorising the grounded theory.

In this study, the themes and relationships between data constructed through coding, as described by Charmaz (2017a), guided the concurrent data collection and analysis and theoretical sampling process (section 2.2.1.2). Thus, theorising on the data included multiple repetitions and reviews to identify themes. The themes were coded by constructing keywords and phrases and grouping these into sub-ordinate categories according to their mutual relationships (Cunningham & Carmichael, 2017). The final and overarching or super-ordinate categories and links were developed by theorising on the data and developing new a theory. The coding process is explained in more detail below.

2.8.1 Coding

Coding comprises an analytical repetition and theorising process during which concepts, actions, similarities, and recurrences of data are identified and assigned interpretive labels (Saldaña, 2021:4). Saldaña (2021:3) defined a code as a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a collective, meaningful, and expressive attribute to a portion of language-

based or visual data. Data comprises transcripts, field notes, journals, documents, drawings, artefacts, photographs, videos, internet sites, email correspondence, social media, and other literature. These sources are coded the same way as interviews and observations (Glaser & Strauss, 1967:161; Saldaña, 2021). This study's coding process depended on the interaction between the researcher and the data, which implies that she was mentally and physically active (Charmaz, 2006). During the open coding phase, the coded content ranged from a single word to a whole paragraph to an entire text page. In the second phase, axial or focused codes comprised similar entities, long text passages, and analytical memos on the data. The reconfiguration of codes into sub-ordinate and super-ordinate categories continued until a point of saturation (Tie *et al.*, 2019).

Accordingly, Charmaz (2006) described coding as the critical link between data collection and explaining the meaning of data and the pivotal point between collecting and analysing data and developing a theory to explain the themes. Each new term, code, or concept was compared with existing codes to define, refine, and search for similarities and differences, patterns, and relationships (Cunningham & Carmichael, 2017). Furthermore, the researcher developed assumptions about the meaning, engaged in memoing, and constructed core categories through theoretical sensitivity and coding.

The entire coding process was encased in doubt, starting from how relevant each piece of data was, what steps to follow during theorising, how to present the research findings, how to write the analytical narrative, and how to ensure that the findings were grounded in data. Doubt further included how to contribute towards a trustworthy discussion of the findings and write an acceptable analytical narrative. Finally, data were manually coded, supported by memo writing, and guided by the critical inquiry process described by Charmaz (2017a, 2017b; 2021). The three coding phases are explained in more detail in the following sections.

2.8.2 Open- or initial coding

Open coding opens the researcher to new theoretical possibilities and explicates the first step in the constructivist grounded theory analysis. The coding process started after the first interview was transcribed to comply with core constructivist grounded theory tenets distinguished as concurrent data collection and analysis and constant comparative data analysis (Charmaz, 2014; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Data from the transcriptions were extracted, collapsed, compared, and examined for similarities and differences through inductive reasoning (Cunningham & Carmichael, 2017). Thus, the open codes contained data broken into discreet parts for comparison, contrast, and labelling. Charmaz (2012) recommended keeping codes compatible and similar to the data while embedding actions throughout the iterative coding process (Tie *et al.*, 2019). At this phase, the researcher constructed as many codes as possible. Important themes and concepts concerning the life and work of the working poor contract cleaners were identified and labelled. It seemed necessary to keep an open mind to avoid limiting the number of codes and what the researcher had already established and experienced about the research phenomenon. Two fractures of data relating to the same category were given the same code.

2.8.2.1 Line-by-line coding

The theorising process started with reading the verbatims line-by-line while identifying open code (section 2.2.1.3). Verbatim- or in-vivo-coding emphasises the participants' actual spoken words (Saldaña, 2021) and helps the researcher to understand and honour the vernacular of

the African culture (Manning, 2017). Each line in the transcripts was inspected to allocate a label to the open code or fragment, comparing it with a particular theme. Coding was done rapidly and spontaneously to prompt analytical thinking while simultaneously engaging in reflexivity and memoing (Giles *et al.*, 2016). This action prevented the researcher from forcing data into predetermined or biased codes according to her beliefs and ideas (Charmaz, 2015; Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014). Hence, precise and straightforward coding ensured that the codes fitted the data rather than forcing specific concepts.

Initial or open coding also required the researcher to decide the gaps in data that should still be retrieved. Birks and Mills (2015) proposed that the longer researchers are immersed in the data, the more their theoretical sensitivity increases. The entire coding process was initialised by reading the transcriptions, applying open coding, sorting codes into categories, reflecting on the theorising strategy through memoing, and applying abductive and retroductive reasoning once further incidents in the coding were exposed (Hoare, Mills & Francis, 2012). Therefore, the researcher delved into the participants' experiences, perceptions, and responses and labelled actions to grasp the meaning.

2.8.2.2 Incident-to-incident coding

The initial line-by-line coding quickly progressed to incident-to-incident coding when the researcher asked herself, "What is happening here?" (Charmaz, 2015). Usually, people compare incidents to find patterns of meaning in everyday life. A large part of open coding existed of labelling incidents and theorising category properties to construct words or sentences that reflect action (Charmaz, 2006). The researcher remained attuned to the participants' realities rather than if they shared the same realities. The open codes were treated as provisional and comparative while remaining open to analytical options as more transcripts were exposed to analytical coding (Giles *et al.*, 2016; Moghaddam, 2006). It became clear that many working poor shared similar life conditions and experiences.

Field notes (section 2.6.1.2) strengthened open coding and conveyed the participants' emotions, tone of voice, body language, verbal language, and facial expressions during the interviews (Philippi & Lauderdale, 2018). If the participants engaged thoroughly during the conversations, the researcher could record the verbal incidents with her observations to enhance meaning (Clifford, 2019). While detailed observations alone did not guarantee an insightful theoretical analysis, they enhanced valuable descriptions through comparative analysis (Charmaz, 2015). Moreover, field notes added to the relationships between codes and raised the analytic level of codes. Personally, the field notes and memo writing reduced the researcher's anxiety and confusion during the coding process and assisted her to recall previous comments and actions.

2.8.3 Axial- or focused coding

The second coding phase comprised similar grounded theory concepts, such as identifying codes, constantly comparing data, applying theoretical sensitivity, and writing memos to enhance engagement with the data (Tie *et al.*, 2019). The researcher applied axial coding to draw connections between the open codes and identify categories containing properties that seemed essential to the theory. These sub-ordinate categories were further refined into sub-ordinate categories and finally raised to super-ordinate categories. Once more, the iterative coding process did not occur in linear format but moved back and forth between initial and axial coding whenever new concepts and themes were discovered (Glaser & Strauss, 1967;

Charmaz, 2006). Axial coding and theorising transformed rudimentary data into abstract concepts and categories as soon as the codes clustered around core categories (Tie *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, existing categories were examined to detect new categories, subsume categories beneath others, and refine categories according to their properties and dimensions.

Category properties denote characteristics common to all concepts that give them meaning (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The dimension of a category describes the position of each property in the range. Hence, properties and dimensions add rich meaning to the category (Moghaddam, 2006). Axial coding combined codes to theorise and develop more significant data segments. In the advanced stage, sub-ordinate categories were thus refined into super-ordinate or overarching categories. These categories were more focused, selective, and abstract than the initial or open codes (Glaser, 1978). Axial coding entailed an evolving process consistent with constructivist grounded theory logic to discover where unexpected categories could be constructed from the data. Furthermore, codes had to be compared with data to tell what code fits an incident or statement related to the research topic (Tie *et al.*, 2019). Accordingly, axial coding moved abductively across the open codes and transcripts to compare experiences, actions, and interpretations.

While axial coding determined the suitability of earlier codes and categories were combined and renamed, theoretical sensitivity and reflexivity influenced what codes made the most sense (Giles *et al.*, 2016; Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014). The constant comparison of codes with data enabled the researcher to continually refine the themes and establish whether these accounted for new categories (Charmaz, 2015). As the codes became more analytical and theoretical, they allowed a higher abstraction and theorising level (Giles *et al.*, 2016). These categories supplied the axes around which their supporting codes revolved. Axial coding enabled the researcher to determine the adequacy and theoretical intensity of the categories raised to theoretical codes.

2.8.4 Theoretical coding and sampling

Theoretical or selective coding signifies the last step in grounded theory, where super-ordinate categories are integrated to define a unified theory or modify a theory based on the research (Glaser & Holton, 2004). This step guided theory construction during advanced coding, memoing, and sorting data into super-ordinate categories. Thus, theoretical coding creates a pattern for verifying and establishing grounded integration (Glaser, 1978). Moreover, axial and theoretical coding are not separate steps but happen simultaneously. Consequently, the researcher focused on sorting open codes around axes and theoretically selecting and integrating sub-ordinate categories into super-ordinate categories.

Theoretical sampling (section 2.2.1.2) developed, refined, and compared tentative category properties. This action pursued additional data to be sampled for elaborating on the sub-ordinate and super-ordinate categories. In addition, theoretical sensitivity provided insight for separating relevant and irrelevant codes and reflecting on the meanings assigned to participants' beliefs, opinions, actions, and experiences through methodological self-consciousness and memoing (Giles *et al.*, 2016; Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014). Theoretical sampling also ensured that the categories grew more robust and focused while it helped the researcher remain grounded in the data (Charmaz, 2015). Finally, data were sampled to satisfy the questions on the properties of categories (Charmaz, 2015). Relevant categories were elevated as super-ordinate categories for creating a new theory to guide the analytical narrative writing.

In summary, theoretical categories were constantly constructed and became more extensive until theoretical saturation was reached (Saunders *et al.*, 2018). At this stage, all concepts elevated to core categories seemed abstract and represented highly speculative terms for writing the analytical narrative or storyline. Theoretical coding seemed essential to produce a theory grounded in data while simultaneously containing explanatory power (Tie *et al.*, 2019). The theoretical coding process required considerable theoretical sensitivity and reflexivity from the researcher to recognise and extract themes relevant to the analytical narrative (Birks & Mills, 2015). Finally, the researcher selected the super-ordinate categories as tools to build a new theory and write the analytical narrative.

2.8.5 Theoretical integration

Theoretical integration begins with axial coding and continues through the subsequent analytical steps (Charmaz, 2006), where all categories are connected around one core category. Theoretical analysis entails theorising on data from all sources and integrating substantial categories into overarching categories for writing the analytical narrative. As a result, the analytical narrative conveys a new theory grounded in data not influenced by internal or external opinions (Birks *et al.*, 2008; Tie *et al.*, 2019). In the study at hand, the theory was validated by logically defining the relationships between sub-ordinate and super-ordinate categories and weaving them into a core or overarching category, ultimately representing the central thesis of the research from which to write the analytical narrative (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). After completing the grounded theory, core insights from the literature review were triangulated and integrated to add explanatory power to the analytical narrative.

2.9 LIMITATIONS

Limitations refer to those methodological characteristics that are out of the researcher's control but may influence the research findings (Price & Murnan, 2004). Furthermore, limitations determine the internal and external validity of the study and are considered potential weaknesses (Creswell, 2013). For example, a limitation experienced during the research process was writing the constructivist grounded theory according to institutional research guidelines. These guidelines require commencing the research with a chapter on the literature review followed by the research methodology, presenting the research findings, and discussing them. Such a linear approach did not reflect the constructivist grounded theory that builds new theories from overarching themes from theorising data (Charmaz, 2006). Consequently, the literature review was suspended until after developing the independent analysis and then triangulated with the grounded theory to increase the analytical strength of the research. The thesis is thus presented with headings and sub-headings allocated according to the constructivist grounded theory methodology. Hence, Chapter 2 describes the Research Design and Methodology, followed by the Literature Review in Chapter 3. However, institutional research writing guidelines were still followed as far as possible.

Collecting data from the purposively selected participants posed a challenge. The personal in-depth interviews were limited to Saturdays. The participants travelled to the company with little transport on weekends during the COVID-19 lockdown. In addition, it made re-access to participants for additional data or confirming facts more cumbersome. Notably, COVID-19 substantially impacted the personal in-depth interviews and the number of participants allowed in the face-to-face focus group meeting. Videoconferencing for the personal in-depth interviews and first focus group discussion was not an option due to participants not having access to digital technology, conferencing facilities and unlimited internet data. In addition,

mobile phones did not serve as convenient tools for personal in-depth interviews. However, the issue could be resolved by building a rapport before and during the interviews and using electronic messaging. The second focus group discussion was performed via videoconferencing, which also presented its challenges. A few experts enthusiastically contributed to the focus group discussion, which challenged the engagement of other less fluent participants within the limited discussion period of one hour.

The researcher needed to stay sensitive to personal biases that might have influenced the concurrent data collection and analysis process (Bergen & Labonté, 2020). A critical inquiry containing constructivist grounded theory methods reduced the potential of importing preconceived assumptions about human intentions, actions, and meanings into the research and minimised cultural or class biases permeating the data collection and analysis process (Charmaz, 2020). Thus, the researcher constantly had to reflect on the data, what should or could be omitted, how she ordered events, people and places, and how she used words with a potential positive or negative connotation. In some cases, fluency in English seemed challenging as most participants could not clearly express their thoughts and emotions. It called for slowing down the interviews and constantly repeating phrases and questions. Each interview was recorded and transcribed to capture the essence of the participants' contributions and stories.

Furthermore, cultural language posed a challenge. Therefore, the researcher had to stay observant and create a researcher-participant relationship to deal with cultural language and thinking, and bridge participant experiences with her research questions (Helmich, Cristancho, Diachun & Lingard, 2017). Being acquainted with the cleaning contract services environment helped her position the questions correctly, which enriched the data collection and analysis process. She listened to the cleaner's stories and viewed their reactions with the expectation of grasping meaning from the data. However, her reality remained an interpretation of the participants' reality and not a reproduction of it.

The cross-sectional extraction of data from the company database posed a limitation. The selected participants represented only a sample of the working poor population in the company's database at a specific date and time. Consequently, the selected sample might not represent the life and work conditions of the entire contract cleaner population (Corroon & Phillips, 2018). However, during the COVID-19 epidemic, a longitudinal study of contract cleaners was not viable. Contract cleaners were not easily accessible due to their working and travelling hours, life conditions, and unwillingness to partake in events without remuneration. Therefore, participants were limited to those cleaners who were able and willing to participate in the research. The consequences are that other researchers using different philosophies, methods, and participants might derive different theories on the working poor. However, the research design and processes were described in detail to prevent any incongruity in the research findings and to ensure the transferability of the research results (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

2.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The ethical discussion includes potential confidentiality concerns surrounding the research, the researcher's values and role, and her ethical responsibility to protect participants' rights and welfare during and after the research (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Bryman, 2016). For example, a critical inquiry into the life and work conditions of the African female working poor in the South African contract cleaning industry focused primarily on their upbringing, education, causal conditions, and circumstantial restraints. Such qualitative social research may intrude

into the everyday activities of these individuals and often requires participants to reveal information about themselves and the work environment that is unknown to the researcher (Babbie, 2013). Accordingly, the researcher first applied for ethical clearance and received permission from the Ethical Clearance Committee of da Vinci Institute to perform the study (Appendix G). The employer granted permission to interview employees in the company and extract the necessary data from the company's database (Appendix A).

2.11 ENSURING DATA QUALITY

Confirmability of the research refers to what degree the researcher allowed her values to intrude on the research (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Bryman & Bell, 2015; Bryman, 2016). The researcher avoided exploiting or harming the research participants by not asking intrusive questions or making suggestions or promises about improving work conditions and payment when participating in the research. Participants were undoubtedly informed that their contributions and information would not be used for private gain. Being in a managerial position, the researcher remained conscious of ongoing organisational activities and reported any disturbances that would result from the research beforehand. She communicated her research aim clearly to the participants, organisation, and other people involved. No person was forced to participate in the research or to respond to questions they felt uncomfortable answering.

Quality and *applicability* of the methodological consistency of the grounded theory could be ensured by using a semi-structured interview guide and asking the question: "What is the core category, and how do the super-ordinate categories relate to it?" (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). New theories were grounded in data and encompassed a variety of participants' experiences (Charmaz, 2014). Furthermore, the researcher ensured that her subjective opinions did not affect the concurrent data collection and analysis process. Time was spent listening to the participants' perceptions, asking more questions, comparing them with other thoughts, reflecting, and sorting through the themes and meanings. Therefore, memo writing, theoretical sensitivity, and reflexivity were applied throughout the research to ensure a true reflection. The researcher showed her respect by making a concerted effort to learn from the participants' circumstances, views, and actions and understand their lives from their perspectives.

Trustworthiness of the research ensured that all identified ethical guidelines for informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity were followed (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Participants received their invitations to the personal in-depth interviews and focus group discussions well in advance. They were informed of the purpose of the interviews before participation and that they could withdraw at any stage. *Informed consent* implies that participants received adequate information about the study, understood the explanations, and had the power of choice, enabling them to consent or decline participation voluntarily (Xu *et al.*, 2020). Additionally, participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. They would not be identified in any way. Dates and times for conducting the in-depth interviews and focus group meetings were negotiated with the participants well in advance. The researcher used structural communication as the first step in building a trusting relationship with the participants.

Dependability is a qualitative assessment concept that requires researchers to keep all data in safe storage for three to five years (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Participants' permission was requested to record the interviews under unidentified names that they could select before the interviews. Thus, confidentiality and anonymity were discussed in detail with the participants before the interviews. They were assured that no discrimination would occur before, during, or

after the interviews as they would not be identified in the recordings, transcriptions, and thesis. Focus group discussions and recommendations were recorded and reported as coming from the group, and no statement was linked to a specific participant in the meetings. The audio-recorded interviews, transcriptions, and other data have been stored in a locked cabinet. Electronic data are kept in a password-protected folder on cloud software for five years, after which the data will be destroyed.

Fairness and rigour of the research confirm that the research context and data include actual findings, the researcher used the correct research methods and shared the research outcomes (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Bryman & Bell, 2015). In addition, the researcher shared her research concepts and potential application with her work colleagues beforehand and during her role as general manager and the constructivist grounded method and design were described throughout the research. Once the thesis has been approved, it will be published in the public domain.

Authenticity of the research, especially tactical authenticity, assesses whether the research has empowered the researcher and participants to take the necessary steps to engage in action (Bryman & Bell, 2015) and change the current situation in the company. Return on investment (ROI) can only be confirmed after the publication of the thesis, acceptance by management, and the application of the recommendations or competency-building framework in a pilot study. A copy of the thesis containing a framework or list of competencies building programmes and actions for the upliftment of the working poor will be presented to the employer company management.

2.12 CONCLUSION

This chapter described the constructivist grounded theory methodology and design of the qualitative inquiry into the African female working poor in the contract cleaning industry in South Africa. The company's head office in the Gauteng region was used as the research site. Two research objectives covered in the primary research were to investigate the African females' actual life and work conditions and explore their learning and career ambitions to derive a competency-building framework for the upliftment of the working poor. The critical inquiry commenced with purposive sampling of twenty-five low-wage African female cleaners selected from the company's database who had no training for competency building and upliftment. Twenty-two personal in-depth interviews with available and willing cleaners; one focus group discussion with five career path progressors, and one focus group discussion with six advancers or impactors on progress in the company were performed. Information was elicited through concurrent data collection and analysis. A constant comparative method focused on the cleaners' perceptions, stories, emotions, and experiences of their life and work conditions. Data were compared and verified against data from the two focus groups to create a new theory. The data analysis process included initial or open coding, axial or focused coding and theoretical coding and sampling, during which the initial themes were coded and integrated into sub-ordinate and super-ordinate or overarching categories. These core categories guided the theoretical coding to construct a new theory and write the analytical narrative. The constructivist grounded theory described in this chapter will be presented in Chapter 4.

Chapter 3 will explore theoretical concepts and constructs in the literature relevant to the research phenomenon. Finally, the constructivist grounded theory described in this chapter and insights from the Literature Review will be presented and triangulated in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life. But, while poverty persists, there is no true freedom — Nelson Mandela, 2005 (n.p).

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Poverty and working poverty include diverse social, political, economic, and cultural interdependencies that call for an agreement on moral and political rules of behaviour (Anciano, 2021; Spahn, 2018). The introduction to this thesis indicated that effective poverty reduction requires logical thinking systems for reasoning about poverty, defining solutions, and actively deriving a competency-building framework for the upliftment of the working poor in South Africa (Beck, 2006; 2007; Abrahams, 2016). Typically, innovative thinking and actions are needed to reduce poverty's impact on people, communities, and environments (Sofu & Wicks, 2017). As noticed in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, this study focuses on the African female working poor in the contract cleaning industry in South Africa. Chapter 2 explained the constructivist grounded theory methodology for collecting and analysing data from low-wage African female contract cleaners through their narrations about their life and work conditions and their aspirations and dreams for a better life.

The research problem stated that elevated levels of unemployment and the low level of education skills required for most cleaning jobs enable employers to recruit new employees effortlessly, thereby actively negating the need for skills development for upliftment and impeding the ability of the African female working poor in this sector to break the poverty cycle. Consequently, the research aim is to derive a competency-building framework for the upliftment of South African female contract cleaners at the lowest pay rate. The emphasis of this chapter will fall on collecting secondary research literature on concepts relating to the poor in general and, more specifically, the African female working poor in South Africa. Concrete insights about competencies need to be developed to address the dilemma of the working poor in South Africa in general. The intent is to triangulate the findings from the literature review with the primary research and develop an analytical narrative grounded in theory. The new theory will be applied to derive a competency-building framework for the upliftment of the African female working poor in the South African contract cleaning industry. Therefore, the objective that falls within the aim of the study is to

Critically interrogate theoretical concepts and constructs relating to the poor and working poor in South Africa

Relevant academic research on poverty and working poverty is explored through a lens reinforced by theoretical frameworks that include Spiral Dynamics, Karpman's Drama Triangle, and theories on personal authority, emotional intelligence, self-identity, and self-determination. The idea is to discover how people's Value Systems or thinking influence their education and skills, life and work conditions, and movement between Human niches. In addition, this study

needs to investigate whether people can abide by social contracts, possess resistance and build mechanisms to escape the poverty cycle. The literature review will consider poverty and working poverty in general and the upliftment of African females in the cleaning industry in South Africa in particular. South Africa has unique social and labour issues that cannot be compared with circumstances in the western, eastern, and northern hemispheres or other African countries where poverty is rife. However, politics and governments vary in different countries (Anciano, 2021). Therefore, the literature review will focus on the South African perspective to derive mechanisms for the upliftment of the working poor while considering global perceptions and recommendations where appropriate.

3.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Dunne and Üstündağ (2020:18) concurred that common and not-so-common theoretical framework and methods should be identified early in a field of study. Solid knowledge of the theory ultimately lends itself to producing an original and valid research output (Dunn & Üstündağ, 2020). The first theoretical framework considered for this study is Spiral Dynamics (Beck & Cowan, 1996), which embraces personal and social change and transformation through people's integral value systems or thinking systems. Viljoen and Laubscher (2015) explained these value Systems as human niches that will be discussed in the next section. The second theory, the Drama Triangle (Karpman, 1968), has value due to its modification and use for transforming people's Victim mentality into enablement for upliftment and emancipation. The third theoretical framework deals with people taking responsibility and control of their lives by developing personal authority, emotional intelligence, self-identity, and self-esteem for self-determination. Although several other integral psychosocial and organisational theories are available, these theories were selected for initiating competencies and transformation towards a more sustainable humankind and environment. Human nature is not fixed, and there is no single set of values to which people live (Beck, 2006; Beck *et al.*, 2018). The Spiral Dynamics discussion leans heavily on the information retrieved from Graves (1970; 1971; 1974), Beck (2006; 2007; 2012), Beck and Cowan (1996; 2014), Beck *et al.* (2018), Laubscher (2013), and several publications by Viljoen and colleagues. Viljoen is integrating Spiral Dynamics and taking it forward in South Africa.

3.2.1 Spiral Dynamics

Spiral Dynamics, as a theory, was initiated by Beck and Cowan (1996). It is based on Graves' (1970; 1971; 1974) longitudinal research and publications on how people think about life, politics, sports, religion, economics, and ethics (Beck, 2006). Graves took 30 years to produce his theory on the emergent, cyclical, and double-helix model of bio-psychosocial behaviour. Consequently, he discovered that theories from Freud to Watson and Skinner's behaviourism to the humanistic approach of Maslow and Rogers, rather than being contradictory, embody different stages of people's psychological development (Beck, 2006). Graves stated that when challenges arise and humans cannot solve "wicked" problems at their current level of being, they awaken and leap to a different, higher-order system biologically, psychologically, socially, and spiritually (Beck, Larsen, Solonin, Viljoen & Johns, 2018). "Wicked" problems are man-made predictions that disregard any standard attempt to find a solution due to numerous conditional and conflicting issues. The information needed to understand the problem depends on people's desires to solve the problem (Rittel & Webber, 1973:155-169). In the case of this study, it is finding a solution to poverty and the working poverty of the African female contract cleaners. Other wicked problems are environmental degradation, and social and economic

inequalities worsened by authorities attempting to address problems through a single design or regimented, established processes (Marshall, 2016).

In contrast, the human has a powerful and dynamic mind that quickly recalibrates itself in response to life conditions (Beck & Cowan, 2014; Beck *et al.*, 2018). Emergent consciousness and transformation are never-ending processes that do not occur in a single event. “We are always engaged in the process of becoming something more than we were and not yet what we will [or want to] be” (Beck *et al.*, 2018: xviii). Therefore, the human spiral represents a developmental framework portrayed as a coiled string of human worldviews or Value Systems (Figure 3.1) that people hold under particular and changing life conditions throughout their lifetimes (Beck & Cowan, 2014; Viljoen & Laubscher, 2015). Each coil ascends to greater complexity as the spiral unfolds, and a different way of understanding reality comes to the fore (Beck, 2006). When a new value or thinking system emerges, the older systems remain subsumed in the flow of new, more complex, life conditions. As soon as the old circumstances reappear, it may prompt people’s previous enactments to resurface (Beck & Cowan, 2014; Donkers, 2016).

3.2.1.1 *Value Memes (vMemes) and Human niches*

Viljoen and Laubscher (2015) refer to “Value Systems” as thinking systems or “Human niches” where the human brain functions best to address a life condition or difficulty at that specific period. Thus, memetic codes express a particular way of thinking, a core Value System, a level of psychological existence, a belief system, an organising principle and a mode of adjustment that permeates thinking structures, decision making, and different cultural expressions (Beck *et al.*, 2018). Moreover, a vMeme is an iterative thinking pattern, a unit for transmitting an idea, behaviour, style, thought, or a piece of information repeated from person to person within a culture (Laubscher & Viljoen, 2015; Pezeshki, 2018). Memes can intensify or blur as life conditions (historical times, geographical places, existential problems, and social circumstances) change (Beck & Cowan, 2014). Like genes, they self-replicate and can be transmitted to offspring, mutate, and respond to selective pressures to form various mental structures (Beck, 2006). These adaptive memes express themselves in terms of lifestyle, economic, political, religious, education structures, and Value Systems around morals (sex, fraud, and theft), marriage, working, and the environment (Beck & Cowan, 2014; Beck, 2006; Beck *et al.*, 2018). It is important to note that a memetic code is a structure that shows *how* people think about things and not *what* they think.

3.2.1.2 *Forces in the evolutionary spiral*

Consequently, the two forces actively engaged in the evolutionary spiral are people’s life conditions and thinking systems because human existence is inundated with unsolved problems (Beck & Cowan, 2014). When life conditions change, humans, representing complex adaptive intelligences, need to change their minds to deal with these problems. New neurological pathways awaken the brain to propel and adapt to new, higher-order thinking abilities different in culture, place, time, and circumstances (Beck *et al.*, 2018; De Salle, 2018). However, if life becomes too hard or crises, such as COVID-19, become too difficult to handle, people may regress into a less complex way of being (Beck, 2006; Laubscher, 2013). Typically, complex adaptive intelligences awake in response to life conditions that push them forward and up the spiral (Beck *et al.*, 2018). Apart from simultaneously living in different eras, geographical places also impact people’s social values and actions unique to a particular

culture (Laubscher, 2013; Beck & Cowan, 2014). Secondly, these human niches provide solutions to specific life conditions through vMemos that can manifest themselves in healthy and unhealthy values or truths, being both attractive and hideous forces behind the development of values settled deep down the roots of being (Graves, 1974; Laubscher, 2013; Laubscher & Viljoen, 2015).

Graves (1974), followed by Beck (2006) and Laubscher (2013), emphasised that one human niche is not better than another. However, the best value system for a specific set of life conditions will be the most congruent. Because value systems relate to *how* people think and not *what* they think (Beck *et al.*, 2018; Donkers, 2016), codes are settled *in* people. There are no codes *of* people (Beck *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, understanding the different codes and their unique intelligences, gifts, and side effects is an essential leadership skill to ensure sustainable cultures, organisations, and a planet (Beck, 2006; Beck *et al.*, 2018; Viljoen, 2008). Some principles of Spiral Dynamics, as explained by Beck and Cowan (1996), were summarised by Donkers (2016):

- i. People and organisations have different Value Systems simultaneously available.
- ii. New Value Systems evolve upward towards greater complexity and embrace all older Value Systems in their transcendence.
- iii. Older Systems stay active in humans and reappear if life conditions require them.
- iv. One Value System is never better than another; it only provides a more appropriate response to a particular situation.
- v. Different people experiencing similar circumstances can and will develop different Value Systems.
- vi. People may experience the same issues but from different Value System perspectives.

Figure 3.1 displays the different colours that Beck and Cowan (1996) assigned to Graves' initial alphabetical codes (AN, BO, and CP) in their negotiations with the South African government to transform the country from apartheid into a democracy. These colours describe deep codes or archetypes of thinking at play in the individual and collective, impacting how humans respond to changes in life conditions and adapt to the environment (Laubscher, 2013). The core of the development process displays eight Value Systems and organising structures in the spiral that emerges from a unique life condition and a new level of problems to unravel (Beck, 2006). The 'old paradigm', business, management, education, and community of the previous dominant system fade into an upward spiral of evolving new Memos to portray a more dominant system (Beck & Cowan, 2014). An individual enters a new level when showing specific behavioural characteristics typical to the new level and its problems. Therefore, when a group or society incorporates a new level of problem-solving by some means, all or most members move to the same new level (Laubscher; 2013; Donkers, 2016). The only way to transfer to the next level lies in a new way of thinking (Beck & Cowan, 2014).

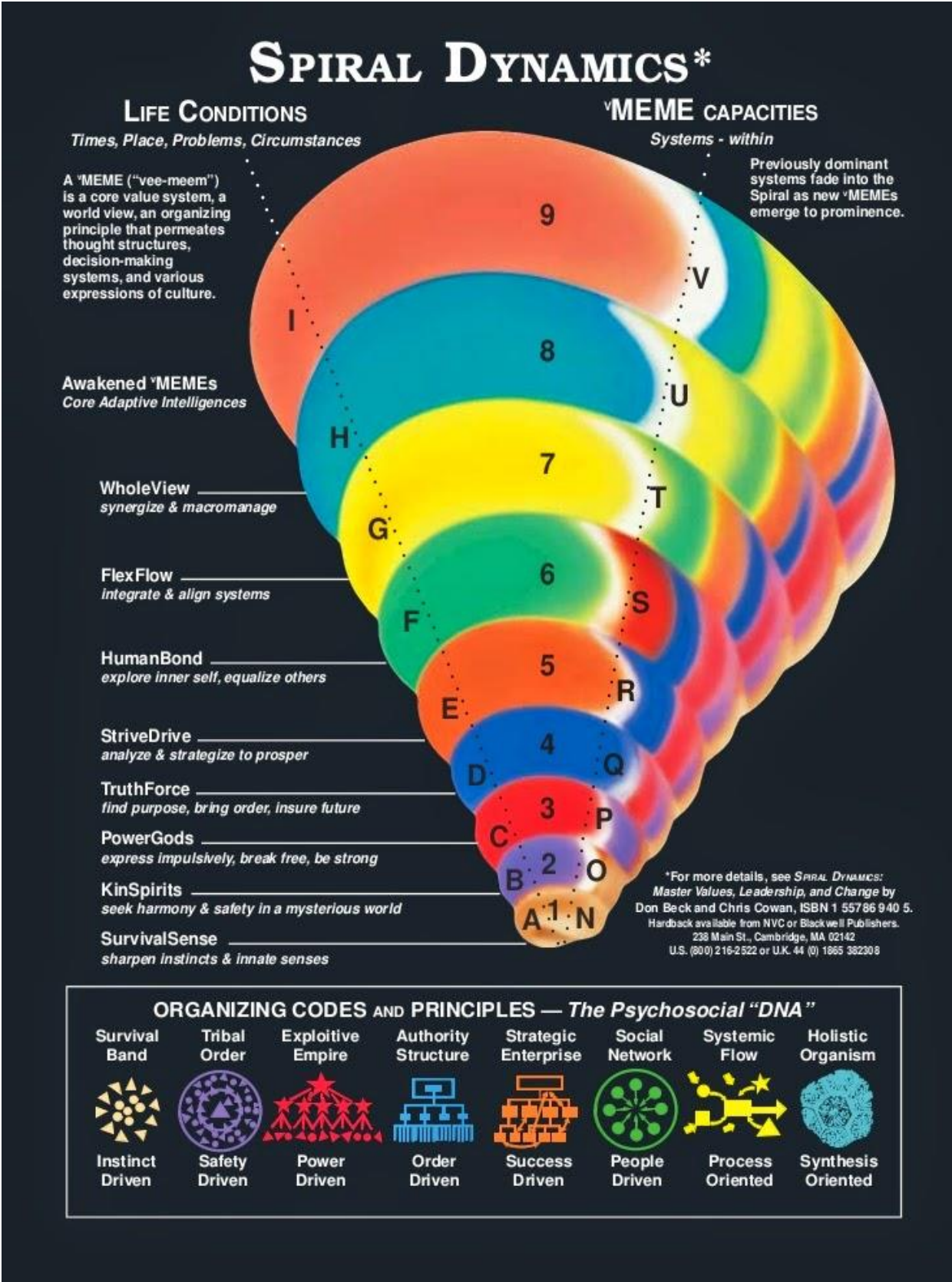


Figure 3.1: Spiral Dynamics
Source: Beck et al. (2018: xxiii).

3.2.1.3 *Life conditions and human niches*

Although eight Value Systems are illustrated in Figure 3.1, this study will discuss the Beige, Purple, Red, Blue, Orange, Green, and Yellow human niches. The reason is that the life and work conditions of the African female working poor and their upliftment in the contract cleaning industry fall mainly within the first three colours. However, they are exposed to Blue, Orange, Green, and Yellow Niches in which they may be absorbed. People's thinking patterns have changed over time, and new human niches have led to new complex realities, extending the concept of Value Systems globally (Laubscher, 2013; Blom & Viljoen, 2016). Furthermore, although there are diverse descriptions and coping mechanisms for each human niche, the discussion will focus on those thinking systems and their experiences elicited from the research participants during the primary research.

Beige

The fundamental ways of thought, action, culture and organisation for *Beige* people include survival, instinct, needs satisfaction, reproduction, satisfying instinctive urges, food, sleep, warmth, shelter, crisis management, herd-like behaviour that often changes format, and anarchy (Graves, 1971; 1974; Beck & Cowan, 1996). Laubscher (2013), who spent her life studying South African dynamics, estimated that roughly 9 % of all Beige people in South Africa are struggling to survive. In addition, Laubscher and Viljoen (2015) believed that there is still between 9 % and 15 % Beige thinking in Africa, which might have increased with the shock of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, although the Beige survival human niche includes approximately 10 % of the global adult population, it has about 0 % power and input in management strategies (Beck and Cowan, 2014; Beck *et al.*, 2018). It is highlighted that this figure was documented before the worldwide pandemic probably increased this percentage significantly.

Beige is a thinking system based on the primal desire to survive, with its key traits being self-preservation and doing what needs to make it through each day, night, week, or month (Beck & Cowan, 2014; Laubscher, 2013; Viljoen & Viljoen, n.d.). Thus, Beige people's existence is dominated by survival on every level of being, with the mind, spirit, and body entirely focused on fight, food, water, shelter, and reproducing (Laubscher, 2013; Viljoen & Viljoen, n.d.). The complexity of the outside world is beyond their comprehension as they have no experience and reference points to other human niches (Beck & Cowan, 2014). Their total experience is of their own body and immediate surroundings, while their world is dominated by thoughts and questions concerning food, physical experience, and safety. Typically, these questions are the human's common starting point in life. Although Beige people occasionally herd together for sustenance, they do not trust easily and disperse when sensing covert theft (Viljoen & Viljoen, n.d.). Beige does not have a natural capacity or reason for engaging in long-term relationships.

According to Beck and Cowan (2014), Beige denotes an inclusive term for all early evolutionary stages and drives. It becomes more noticeable in times of great crises, such as 9-11 [11 September 2001], the COVID-19 pandemic, revolutions, and riots during which some people could conditionally regress into Beige (Freeman, 2015). Beige Human niches need sustenance and support to remain alive. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic caused the lay-off of around 3 million people. At the same time, disaster food packages did not reach all the needy and their extended families. People had no money and had to rely on under-the-breadline wages. As a result, many workers resorted to coping strategies like borrowing money, seeking help from family and friends, and selling assets (WIEGO, 2021). While necessary for the short-term coping of the poor, these actions could hurt their resilience and

ability to recover in the longer term. Beige people do not question how to invest in the future or follow safety rules when surviving in the present (Viljoen & Drotskie, 2017; Viljoen, 2015).

Consequently, poverty and trauma have a significant impact on developing Beige thinking. Crises in other human niches could cause them to shut down and revert to Beige thinking. Beige might become the prominent human niche in South Africa if life and work conditions do not improve (Laubscher, 2013; Viljoen & Viljoen, n.d.). The reason is that irrational behaviour manifests when the survival of Beige, which includes money, food, and safety, is threatened. Disaster relief teams often deal with Beige survival thinking in its lowest form.

Moreover, Beige is commonly observed in infants, small children, and survivors of war or natural disasters where people need to rely on basic human instincts for survival (Laubscher, 2013). Caregivers are often confronted with Beige behaviour when elders revert to an infant stage (Viljoen, van Wyk, Toendepi & Viljoen, 2018). However, even if poverty is eradicated, there will still be Beige thinking in the elderly, the very young, nomadic tribes, people with substance abuse, and those with psychiatric and personality disorders (Laubscher, 2013; Viljoen & Drotskie, 2017).

During the South African riots and violence of the July 2021 Zuma unrest, many people reverted to Beige and Red. They grabbed the opportunity to clean out the shops when anarchy flared up. The looters did not care about being photographed by news reporters while carrying the loot due to Beige and low-Purple thinking, not linking actions to consequences. As a result, more than ZAR 100 million in damage occurred at schools across South Africa (Moneyweb, 2021). Likewise, a health worker was caught selling fake COVID-negative certificates for ZAR 500 to international travellers as proof of not being infected with the virus without thinking about the consequences (Sunday Times, 2021). The riots, looting, and fraud resulted in food, fuel, and medical supply shortages, with the local South African Rand (ZAR) currency weakening and affecting the economy negatively (Moneyweb, 2021). Hence, Beige people have a low-rule-following and accountability sense and almost a fatalistic outlook on life (Viljoen & Drotskie, 2017). Viljoen and Viljoen (n.d.) made it clear that discussing Beige is not dealing with intelligence but with a way of thinking or thinking system.

Viljoen (2015) appropriately described Beige as the invisible system due to society's normal boundaries not applying to them. They are unpredictable and move to where they prefer to be left alone in an invisible lifestyle that serves them best. If their identity is disturbed, they may show public distress, often leading to incidents with authority (Laubscher, 2013; Laubscher & Viljoen, 2015; Viljoen & Drotskie, 2017). They can survive without money and wages, making them a capitalist system superpower. Similarly, in the work environment, Beige people are not concerned about being dismissed because they remain masters at survival with almost nothing to gain or lose (Viljoen & Drotskie, 2017; Viljoen *et al.*, 2018).

Because Beige people often do not operate well in corporate systems, it has been assumed that Beige does not appear in organisations. However, Viljoen (2018) and Laubscher and Viljoen (2015) asserted that Beige is found in spaces and systems where they function under their own conditions. Therefore, managers, leaders, and organisational consultants should accept that some workforce members are Beige and will display Beige thinking. A more idealistic interpretation of the Spiral Dynamics theory is that Beige people will rise beyond Beige if poverty is resolved. However, according to Viljoen (2018), some people will move up the spiral, but a high percentage of Beige thinking will remain Beige. Organisations need to note that Beige withdraws from social settings without reason, and logic cannot be applied to

their behaviour, nor can Beige be managed by employing typical organisational strategies. The minute that conflict arises, the fight-or-flight defence mechanism overrides the typical expected worker behaviour (Viljoen, 2015).

The conclusion is that communities in emerging economies will always contain a small Beige component. Some vulnerable employees exposed to drug-addicted family members or erratic elderly parents could be confronted with Beige thinking at home and carry the impact to their office (Laubscher & Viljoen, 2015). Also, those with personality disorders and pathologies may regress and display Beige behaviour in the work environment when put under stress. Laubscher (2013) maintained that a society's reproduction patterns might be studied to understand how Beige thinking develops into Purple. A high Beige population growth might spiral into Purple thinking. Alternatively, limited economic resources put the system under pressure to change living conditions and Purple (especially low-Purple thinking) slips back to Beige (Beck *et al.*, 2018). The reality is that South African employee support and development programmes often need adaptation to deal with Beige dynamics.

Purple

The Purple Value System is of great importance in an organisation since a collective 65 % of the South African population holds a Purple thinking system (Laubscher, 2013). Purple thinking is preoccupied with relationships, kin safety, security, and belonging and will sacrifice the self for the family, community, and tribe. Women often have submissive roles to play within this human niche. They are often hard workers, do the cleaning and cooking, and take care of their families (Viljoen, 2015; Laubscher & Viljoen, 2015). Boys take precedence over girls, are typically fed first, allowed to study, and more readily accepted at community gatherings (Beck, 2013). Family bonds are strong, and traditional ceremonies and rituals are honoured (Laubscher, 2013; Viljoen *et al.*, 2018). Purple shows commitment to the chief, elders, and ancestors. Secrecy is important. Therefore, people that adapt a Purple thinking structure do not publicly uncover the impact of leadership, whether it is good or bad. People try to save face and support and respect their leaders under all circumstances. Accordingly, Purple also believes that other team members should not be publicly disciplined, ridiculed, and rewarded (Laubscher, 2013).

Purple thinking is characterised by the telling of stories and use of metaphors and demonstrations while talking, explaining, and gossiping (Viljoen, 2014a; Viljoen, 2014b). They would talk and build relationships first before working together. Purple identity is based on being part of the collective, while art and music, including drumming, singing, and dancing, form an integral part of celebrating and interacting (Laubscher, 2013; Viljoen *et al.*, 2018). Consultation and harmony are imperative in their way of life. Furthermore, Purple expresses a sense of enchantment with life's mysteries that could include black and white magic. Traditions, such as weddings and funerals, are celebrated using rituals (Beck & Cowan, 2014; Laubscher, 2013) that contributed to the spread of the COVID-19 virus during the lockdown period.

It is critical for Purple that their children have better lives than they had, for which they view a decent education as vital (Laubscher, 2013). Moreover, Purple has a learning system that relies on copying the leader, trainer, and others in training. Similar behaviour can be detected in street vendors and the similar products they sell. Consequently, organisations should provide "doing" in coaching and mentoring programmes for practical, experiential learning interventions. Also, Purple learns better in a group context (Laubscher & Viljoen, 2014). People recognise and attract each other, consult with all relevant parties before deciding, and greet others every time they see them (Viljoen *et al.*, 2018). A low Purple society demonstrates a

more mysterious thinking system engulfed in magic, superstition, and scepticism (Viljoen, 2018). Low Purple people also seem submissive and collaborative and withdraw into an alternative concept of reality when the environment changes. Nevertheless, they keep the old, respected ways and stick to a robust social structure (Martin, Martin & Viljoen, 2017). Over time, typical Purple thinking may overwrite the rules of the organisation or society.

Purple property is jointly owned, and families wear each other's clothes without restriction (Laubscher, 2013). Furthermore, Purple believes that everything must be kept in the family. So, when a job or vacancy becomes available, Purple will recommend a family member regardless of the job specifications and qualifications. If a vacancy or tender is advertised, they would take unrestricted power to offer it to family members and justify that they can meet the requirements (Viljoen *et al.*, 2018). Usually, there is little understanding of responsibility and consequences, and therefore, the future is often not considered. Purple thinking transmits the idea of "us against them" or "us against you" (Beck & Cowan, 2014; Laubscher, 2013).

On the contrary, high Purple thinking appears royal, wise, deep, and relational (Beck *et al.*, 2018; Viljoen & Drotskie, 2017). Furthermore, the Purple human niche concerned with the survival and well-being of its kind, and when times are tough, people can call on grandparents, relatives, and close friends for help (Beck, 2006). Emotions and perceptions drive cultural and political phenomena and responses. Laubscher (2013) stressed that the Purple self is not individually but collectively identified. Thus, identity does not reside with the individual but in an interchange between the self, human, physical, and sacred domains.

Most organisational development initiatives in South Africa fail because business leaders do not consider their workers predominantly Purple. Purple people love to speak personally to their leaders (Viljoen, 2018). If this does not happen, the unions obtain disproportionate power because the workers would then prefer speaking to union leaders rather than to management. In such cases, people with Purple thinking can easily be mobilised by Red union structures into an uprising (Figure 3.1) (Laubscher, 2013). If leaders do not personally speak to their workers, it may also lead to a sense of disrespect. Typically, Purple thinking does not ask commercial questions due to an analogue thinking system and education, and learning should occur through metaphors and demos, not bullet points and slide shows (Laubscher & Viljoen, 2015). Companies with populations defined by Purple dynamics should strategise, translate, and manoeuvre ways of managing the workforce to optimise their human energy and performance to the good of the system.

It should be noted that Purple finds the Blue way of governance, structure, policy, and standard operating procedure too systematic and inflexible. Therefore, companies should consider how the Purple identity is constructed (Beck *et al.*, 2018). Moreover, management should not attempt to use Blue and Orange ways (discussed below) to try to develop Purple thinking as they may ignore the efforts (Laubscher, 2013). Instead, management should intervene with organisational effectiveness and strategic HR interventions within a Purple thinking system. If management wants to influence Purple workers, they should not patronise them from a typical management thinking system (Laubscher, 2013; Viljoen, 2017). Interventions should include Purple to feel they belong and are consulted on issues concerning productivity and discipline (Laubscher, 2013). They should always be consulted for a shared understanding. Representations should be used whenever possible, and family connections should be recognised and addressed in any new proposals. Those employees that display Purple thinking must be given very short-term targets (weekly) when devising organisational strategy, contracting goal-setting, compiling a remuneration strategy, and motivating workers

(Laubscher, 2013; Viljoen *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, Purple wants to be consulted and included with full management access integrated into the system. They need to be respected for a sense of belonging.

Red

Red is an individualistic and powerful Value System expressing itself for its desires without feeling remorse (Beck & Cowan, 1996). Red people are preoccupied with personal power and asserting the self to dominate others. Therefore, they want to control and regularly search for sensory pleasure. Winning is important, and Red thinking displays visible risk driven by instant gratification (Beck *et al.*, 2018). Roughly 15 % of all South Africans belong to a Red thinking system (Laubscher, 2013). Red has a strong individual profile, is less concerned about traditions and more occupied with obtaining power. Red questions include “What is in it for me?” “Who am I if I am not the tribe?” and “How can I get power?” (Viljoen & Laubscher, 2015). They would do whatever needs to avoid shame or disrespect without feeling guilt or considering others. Red can quickly mobilise Purple, and social rebellion is often the outcome of Red thinking. Red is expressed in many teenagers, the “*Terrible Twos*”, rebellious youth, feudal kingdoms, and street gangs (Beck & Cowan, 2014). Red thinking in the organisation functions by standing tall, expecting attention, demanding respect, and calling the shots. A healthy personification of Red is evident in sports performances, climbing, and areas of personal endeavour against nature (Beck, 2007).

Viljoen *et al.* (2018) believe that Red needs limitless energy to break away from the collective Purple thinking structure and is not overly concerned with kin spirit, the past, and family relations. Red energy is required to disengage from the traditional ways and not be pulled back into how society wants things to be. Red implies breaking away from the old system and letting the individual voice be heard (Viljoen, 2018). Laubscher (2013) explained that people that associate with Red thinking want to understand who they are and for others to acknowledge their unique contribution. Therefore, the requirement for Purple to spiral into healthy Red is to become more powerful and integral in its thinking (Beck & Cowan, 2014). High Red thinking allows people to individualise and know who they are if they are not subsided in the tribe.

In low Red, behaviour quickly becomes bullying, explosive, aggressive, and persistent, with feelings of entitlement manifesting in fraud and violence. These people will probably not adopt another thinking system because Red thinking gives them the power to thrive (Beck & Cowan, 2014). Red thinking and the corresponding behaviour appear to be troublemakers and agitators in organisations and society as they are typically against authority and only interested in the self (Beck, 2008; Viljoen, 2018). On the contrary, management can employ healthy Red thinking to enable Purple to progress and move forward faster, as Purple may sometimes become slow and clumsy. Red may also reject Purple as “*the backward and old school*” (Beck *et al.*, 2018). Because Red enjoys being “*employee of the month*” and receiving individual attention, high Red may be the driving force behind a team (Viljoen, 2018). However, Laubscher (2013) contends that Red is not better than Purple, just different as each human niche is influenced by life conditions. If life requires people to be sturdy and self-assertive to contest an atrocious situation, the Red human niche is the one to have (Beck & Cowan, 2014). Therefore, Red is not an aberration but a normal part of the human meme repertoire.

Graves (1970) stated that people under pressure are often driven by thinking values different from those when relaxed. For example, managers that usually seek consensus for decision making may become dominant and force their own decisions when under pressure (Laubscher, 2013). Beck (2005) suggested that if people want to change, they must shift their

focus to see the situation from a broader perspective that should rely on a fresh set of assumptions about the world. Although a predatory system, Red displays a positive human emergence from the initial self-concept in Purple and Beige (Beck *et al.*, 2018). Red is motivated and energised by success stories and business heroes and celebrates company takeover deeds.

Red appreciates signs of respect, and therefore, Laubscher (2013) recommended that management focus Red energy on projects that need to be delivered rapidly. Red employees need competition and shine when challenged. Because Red needs instant gratification, they should be allocated relatively short-term targets that exhibit visible progress. Salary systems should be adapted to pay for work as soon as completed. Red must know the rules and regulations, and if Red thinking oversteps the line, action must be taken (Laubscher, 2013). The Purple in the tribe and the Red in the gang forge ahead to form the Blue corporate (Viljoen, 2018).

Blue

According to Laubscher (2013), around 10 % of the South African population has Blue Value Systems. Blue thinking is collective and asks, "*How can the individual sacrifice for the benefit of a future for all?*" (Viljoen & Drotskie, 2017:135-157). The Blue human niche is concerned with truth, stability, obedience, meaning, purpose, and future reward. They are convinced that strict rules and regulations safeguard peace, order, and certainty (Beck & Cowan, 2014). Hence, behaviour-based safety strategies and standard operating procedures are part of the Blue practice (Viljoen, 2015). For Blue, a strike is a waste of time and money. People anchored in Blue thinking communicate digitally through authoritative structures and typically view an issue either right or wrong (Laubscher, 2013).

Consequently, Blue logic typically follow the rules and structures, are reliable, and want to help Purple be more structured, early starting, and rule-following (Viljoen *et al.*, 2018). Blue workers are also willing to start at a lower level in the organisation while expecting and working for a better job soon. They believe that they can climb the corporate ladder through hard work, following rules and regulations, personal development programmes, and performance appraisal. Blue also believes that rules should apply to all and values fairness under all circumstances. Therefore, Blue is loyal but expects loyalty in return (Viljoen & Drotskie, 2017). Blue thinking often relies on job descriptions to fulfil their duties, are focused on their job, and disregard issues outside their job description. A Blue Value System creates decent, reliable, well-structured, and consistent behaviour in a company (Beck & Cowan, 2014; Viljoen, 2018). Because Blue thinking operates around the task, personal relationships are typically not that important in the workplace (Laubscher, 2013). Thus, a collective forum replaces the individual voice, and those that do not fit are cast out.

Employees that can be described as displaying Blue thinking ask organisational questions to bring the whole together (Laubscher & Viljoen, 2014). According to Beck (2006), Blue works well in companies that need to comply with corporate governance and where standard operating procedures are critical. Blue thinking is aligned to appease personal guilt and create order and stability (Laubscher, 2013; Viljoen, 2018). Consequently, a large percentage of well-functioning organisations demonstrate Blue.

Blue's radical way of operating and dealing with decisions and ownership may challenge other thinking systems. If otherwise, Blue may feel that they are losing control and that their efforts are failing (Viljoen & Drotskie, 2017). Because Blue thinks digitally and Purple thinks in

analogue or pictures, translation is needed to understand each other (Beck, 2006). A solution may be to align Blue for a more significant cause where joint effort builds stability and removes the impulsivity of earlier colours (Laubscher, 2013). In a way, Blue links to Purple but within a framework of rules that provide security and a sense of purpose (Beck & Cowan, 2014). The anarchy of Red, where everybody does what they think is right, converts into a Blue state of need for order, recognising mortality and searching for meaning and purpose for all (Beck & Cowan, 2014).

The conclusion is that escalating into a Blue value system enables individuals to find deeper meaning and purpose in their lives. They are willing to conform to rules, regulations, and a plan (Beck & Cowan, 2014). Thus, the Blue memetic code displays a kind of fatalistic sacrifice of the self in the present to obtain a better life in future (Beck, 2006). Laubscher's (2013) perception of Blue is that they think they are always right, may be rigid in their thinking, and would sacrifice the self for the future. Because Blue thinking is methodological, the company can gain credibility using these Blue attributes.

Orange

Orange thinking is defined by opportunism, success, competition, results, influence, and autonomy. Around 1 % of the South African population think Orange (Laubscher, 2013). Orange is a maverick system that creates the power to manipulate the environment and resources for enjoying the "good life" (Beck *et al.*, 2018). It contains an inherent optimism and a sense of calculated risk on its success journey, fuelling a sense of control and achievement (Beck, 2006). Orange thinking is invoked when the risk-averse nature of Blue transforms into a risk-taking human niche displaying commercial, negotiating, and entrepreneurial skills for growing business, making money and gaining success (Viljoen *et al.*, 2018). If Orange people are allowed to be enterprising, they can benefit the organisation due to not being trapped in the past and being adventurous enough to diversify income streams (Viljoen & Drotskie, 2017). Orange leaders often breathe new life into stagnant systems, are not caught in what cannot be achieved, and enable new ways of doing (Beck & Cowan, 2014). Healthy Orange is individualistic and often challenged by calculated risks without committing fraud. Furthermore, Orange is interested in the stock market and money-making enterprises (Laubscher, 2013). Orange leaders will often negotiate outside bargaining councils and offer money to solve problems (Laubscher, 2013; Viljoen & Drotskie, 2017).

Low Orange has little regard for the long-term effect on others though strategic attempts will be made to avoid hostility in the short run (Beck & Cowan, 2014). Although Orange is an expressive thinking system, greed, fraud, and egotism are the consequences when becoming excessive. Such behaviour may gradually lead to alienation and the loss of human care and values (Beck, 2006). The Orange human niche a dominant force in today's society, supported by technological successes and global travel (Laubscher, 2013). Orange, like Red, focuses on the self rather than on inclusivity and collectiveness (Beck *et al.*, 2018; Viljoen, 2015).

Laubscher's (2013) insights are that Orange behaviour typically does not make sense to Purple, Red, and Blue as it is viewed as materialistic. Red will envy Orange but does not have the complex thinking to disturb Orange. Orange breaks away from the Blue collective vMeme and strongly expresses individualism. The Orange human niche incorporates about 25 % to 30 % of the world's population, closer to 50 % of the US population, and globally yields 45 % to 50 % of the power. A strong rejection of the materialism of Orange and clinical pragmatism

of Blue emerges with a desire to remove greed and fraud and create harmony and caring in a Green Value System.

Green

Green is a social sharing and caring human niche that questions, "How can we sacrifice for the world's benefit and peace?" (Beck & Cowan, 1996; Laubscher, 2013). Green thinking is defined by harmony, love, mutual growth, awareness, and belonging. Green people are concerned with the survival of the planet and humanity and are interested in conservation and giving back (Beck & Cowan, 2014). Unfortunately, less than 1 % of the South African population possesses Green consciousness (Laubscher, 2013; Viljoen, 2015). Green thinking avoids conflict and hierarchy, needs all people to be equal and reaches decisions through consensus (Beck & Cowan, 2014; Viljoen *et al.*, 2018). It displays little concern for status or privilege, contains a prevailing sense of equality, and desires to share the planet's resources equitably and sustainably (Viljoen, 2015).

Furthermore, Green demonstrates a sense of growing a family-like society, respect for feelings, democracy, and equal opportunity with humanistic concerns typically found in more affluent societies (Beck & Cowan, 2014). Green is the inception of political correctness and policies for inclusion and acceptance at any cost (Viljoen *et al.*, 2018). Thus, Green decisions are no longer driven by autocracy and power but through reconciliation and consensus (Beck, 2006). The difference between Green and Purple thinking and communication is that there is no chief in the centre. Green does not recognise a leader due to shared leadership thinking (Laubscher, 2013). Instead, Green allows for growing inclusivity, valuing feelings, and working for the common good of all (Viljoen, 2014; 2015).

Diversity is welcomed in Green with the belief that it enhances and enriches the experience of life (Viljoen, 2015). However, Green thinking is often observed as slow in business decision making. Green managers want to listen to all sides of the argument and often get caught trying to accommodate different perspectives. As a result, Green decision making may keep changing direction as different opinions are voiced (Viljoen *et al.*, 2018). For example, Don Beck acknowledged that the constitutional design team that assisted in creating a new democracy for South Africa in 2004 faltered, allowing role players to resolve the issue through a Green philosophy. In addition, Green thinking does not have the strength and ability to manage aggression, especially Red hostility (Laubscher, 2013).

Green, by its nature, is a short-term and expensive system (Beck & Cowan, 2014). Despite the Green society's good intentions and egalitarian motives to ensure that everybody has an equal share of the bounty, it typically lacks the code to make things happen (Beck *et al.*, 2018). Laubscher's (2013) insights were that Red could play havoc with Green emotions. Therefore, Green should not negotiate with Red if they do not understand Red thinking. Instead, Green should practise anchoring their views and realise that a Green philosophy is idealistic. Therefore, Beck opined that leaders should design business solutions within a Yellow Value System (Beck, 2006; Beck *et al.*, 2018).

Yellow

The Yellow human niche symbolises independence, self-worth, and a living system with its behaviour deeply rooted in knowledge and reality (Viljoen, 2018). Yellow thinkers are adept at dealing with complexity and finding ways to synthesise different thinking systems (Viljoen & Drotskie, 2018). Beige can survive individually, while Purple requires contribution, care, and

relationships. Red provides energy but must be contained around the negotiation table. Blue follows the rules, is compliant but rigid and needs to respect the structure of the negotiation process. Orange is enterprising and views negotiations, agreements, and contracts as part of their lives (Beck *et al.*, 2018). Green insists on consensus in decision-making and inclusion that displays aspects of Purple but cannot ensure compromises (Laubscher, 2013; Viljoen, 2018). Therefore, Yellow leadership thinking becomes essential to weave these human niches into a more functional organic integral (Viljoen *et al.*, 2018). Yellow thinking functions in hope rather than fear for the present or future.

Nelson Mandela displayed Yellow thinking during the apartheid years, and Yellow could be observed in the late Desmond Tutu and the Dalai Lama (Viljoen, 2015). The ultimate need for Yellow is to optimise the strengths of the other human niches but to minimise their side effects. Given the lack of Yellow leaders, Yellow thinking must deliberately be adapted to deal proactively with conflicting thinking systems (Viljoen & Drotskie, 2017). According to Beck & Cowan (2014) and Viljoen (2018), companies will continue to create and solve the same problems with the same level of thinking if Yellow is not present.

Accordingly, Yellow leadership is branded by trust, integrity, friendliness, fairness, and people values (Beck, 2007). Furthermore, Yellow leaders are eager to assist employees in reaching their full potential. Yellow implements what the planet, people, and organisation need rather than what they want (Viljoen & Viljoen, n.d.; Viljoen, 2018). Where Beige asks, “How do I survive?” Yellow asks, “How does the self (in us and me) survive?” (Viljoen & Viljoen, n.d.). Consequently, the Yellow paradigm is information-rich, highly mobile, flexible, integrative, and knowledge-based as a structure and practice in which all v-Memes of human niches function in harmony.

Although the spiral still includes Turquoise and Coral memetic codes, these higher-order systems will not be discussed in exploring the African female working poor in the contract cleaning industry in South Africa. Instead, the spiral in Spiral Dynamics illustrates the significance of moving to a higher thinking order hugely relevant for deriving mechanisms and a competency-building framework for uplifting the working poor.

3.2.2 Karpman’s Drama Triangle

Closely linked to the transcending and transgressing stages in human niches and their thinking in challenging life conditions is Karpman’s (1968) “*Drama Triangle*”. Karpman developed his human social interaction model in a triangle that plots negative interactions between people in traumatic circumstances and conflict (Shmelev, 2015). He based his model on Berne’s (1958) transactional analysis method, in which Berne invented ego states to explain the games people play and how they relate to each other during conflict.

- i. The parent ego state explains behaviours, thoughts and feelings that people copied from their parents or parent figures to cope with the conflict.
- ii. The adult ego state contains behaviours, thoughts and feelings in direct response to the “*here and now*” of the situation.
- iii. The child ego state replays the behaviours, thoughts and feelings from childhood as a way to “*relate to the conflict*” (Berne, 1958).

Some people are incapable of confronting life’s hurdles, while others cope and, at the same time, try to escape from them (Sanei, 2020). Sanei maintained that the difference between

groups of people does not depend on their intelligence or access to information but on the maturity of their survivor consciousness. As in Spiral Dynamics, the Drama Triangle affirms differences in human behaviour, thinking systems, roles people play in managing life conditions, and how they perceive others to behave (Karpman, 1968). For example, COVID-19 has increased poverty in South Africa due to women disproportionately being affected by the labour market and childcare concerns (Casale & Shepherd, 2021). Furthermore, it became clear that people's reactions to the pandemic were directly related to the maturity of their mindsets as challenges "amplify the underlying conditions and issues that have lingered in our subconscious" (Sanei, 2020 online). Humans respond to challenges by deciding whether it happens *to* them or *for* them, and then they choose either a naïve (negative) mindset or a mature (positive) mindset to handle these issues (Karpman, 1968; Lac & Donaldson, 2020).

The Drama Triangle explains the connection between personal responsibility and power in conflict management and how human role-playing can change. Karpman identified three roles, namely, the Persecutor, Rescuer, and Victim, linked together in a triangular format as three faces of drama (Johnson, 2020). As soon as drama arises, a person adopts either a Victim or Persecutor role. The Victim recruits other players into the drama, and typically, the Rescuer will be encouraged to enter the drama (Graham, 2017). Once inside the triangle, the enlisted players participate in fluctuating roles, causing various evolving scenarios. For example, the Victim may anger the Rescuer, and the Rescuer switches to Persecutor while the Persecutor can adopt the role of a Victim (Karpman, 1968; Lac & Donaldson, 2020). These responses are typical of people's everyday-life situations.

Consequently, actors assume different roles according to their reward from being part of the Drama Triangle (Karpman, 1968). The Victim feels worthy of being cared for, the Rescuer feels good taking care of others, and the Persecutor remains superior to both the Victim and the Rescuer (Graham, 2017). As soon as drama occurs, the actors adopt the roles they typically enact in the family circle (Johnson, 2020). However, although players have a role with which they identify best and could rotate through all three, these roles limit people's performance and predispose them to enter different drama triangles (Clark, 2020; Lac & Donaldson, 2020).

3.2.2.1 The Drama Triangle and its antidote

Few people feel comfortable with conflict. Being stuck between the roles of the oppressive Persecutor, helpless Victim, or good self-sacrificing Rescuer does not make employees or managers good leaders. The naïve mindset, as explained by Sanei (2020), is invented from three negative aspects:

- i. The Victim implies that people are at the mercy of a relentless world that robs them of their entitled reality. Karpman's (1968) Victim is not an actual victim but someone who feels or acts like a victim. Victims believe that other people or things oversee the pace and course of their choices (Mackie, 2019). Therefore, the Victim feels oppressed and mistreated, helpless, hopeless, and ashamed and finds it difficult to make decisions, solve problems, enjoy life, or reach new insights (Lac & Donaldson, 2020).
- ii. The Saviour or Rescuer needs to be needed. They see themselves as superior to Victims and are convinced that sympathy for the deprived is essential (Clark, 2020). Rescuers are classic enablers because they feel guilty if they do not rescue (Aboiron, 2019). However, their saving or rescuing minds may harm Victims as they keep Victims dependent and permit them to fail (Mackie, 2019). Furthermore, the rescuing role may keep Rescuers focusing their energy on someone else's problems and not solving their own (Sanei, 2020).

- iii. The Persecutor or Angry Man represents those individuals who blame everyone from the government to all subjects around them for the situation because it conveniently displaces personal responsibility (Lac & Donaldson; Sanei, 2020). Persecutors adopt a controlling, blaming, critical, oppressive, angry, authoritative, rigid, superior and self-righteous attitude and insist that ‘*It is all your fault*’ (Karpman, 1968; Sanei, 2020). Thus, Persecutors are viewed as rigid and uncompromising (Mackie, 2019).

The Drama Triangle attends to people’s perceptions as they move back and forth between roles (Karpman, 1968). Unfortunately, these roles will persist as long as they fulfil an unmet need instead of addressing real issues, identifying real solutions, and acting (Clark, 2020). For example, the redress of poverty gives rise to dissatisfaction with the government. Simultaneously, the community is unwilling and often unable to realise that poverty is complex due to internal and external factors. Victims become disillusioned when help does not add to a long-term solution (Sanei, 2020). Furthermore, Rescuers start feeling resentment towards those who refuse to be fixed through “*wise counselling*” and best intentions (CirclesUSA, online) while Persecutors keep blaming everyone. The Drama Triangle is typical of South African society playing out.

3.2.2.2 Opting out of the Drama Triangle

The remedy for the Drama Triangle lies in discovering how to deprive actors of their payoffs as no one wins the game. According to Johnson (2020), an actor should stop participating in conflict and move to the centre of the triangle while showing sensitivity, compassion, and responsibility and refusing to accept the opponents’ forces. Though, most people have some well-ingrained thinking patterns that need to be replaced with healthier ones (Lac & Donaldson, 2020; Graham, 2017). Sanei (2020) maintains that to break superior or inferior dynamics requires people to accept differences and similarities as neither good nor bad and without judging who is right or wrong (Sanei 2020). Hence, people see each other as unique individuals with different strengths, abilities, weaknesses, and skills (Clark, 2020). Figure 3.2 illustrates the transformation of the egocentric naïve mindset to a mature mindset for synergy and fulfilment of the higher self.

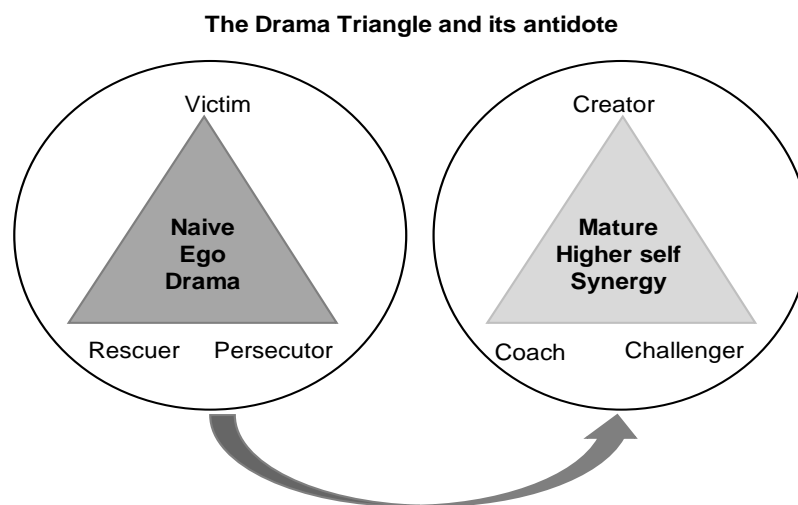
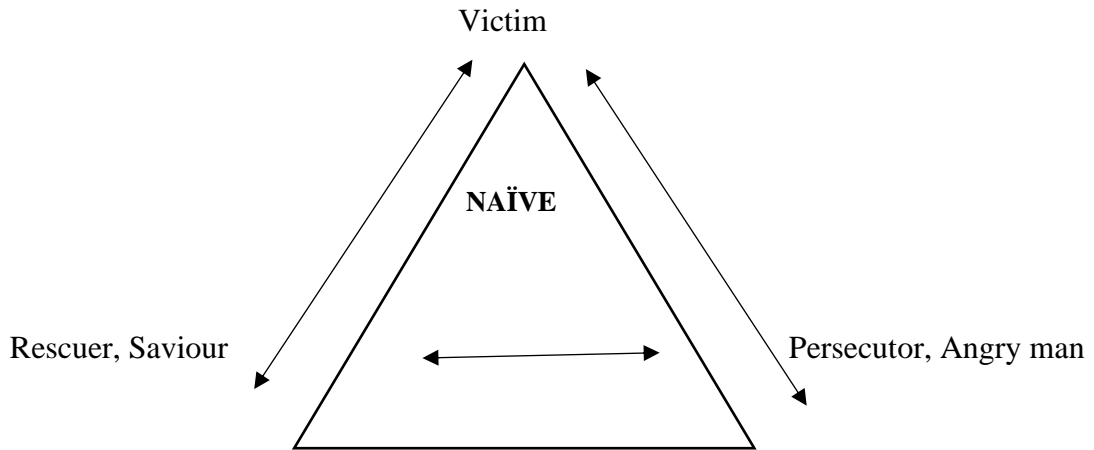


Figure 3.2: The Drama Triangle and its antidote
Source: Own compilation.

Figure 3.2 illustrates that if people are stuck in a naïve mindset (negative), their feelings or frustrations do not help them to progress (Karpman, 1968). Feelings of defeat tend to be selfish, self-centred and self-defeating because focusing on what they are losing blinds their potential to start creating a new future without interruptions (Sanei, 2020).



The mature mindset (positive) is radically different because it helps people channel wasted energy on foolish misconceptions and uses the mind to become creative and optimistic (Clark, 2020). It also consists of the three aspects, but this time in a positive triangle (Sanei, 2020).

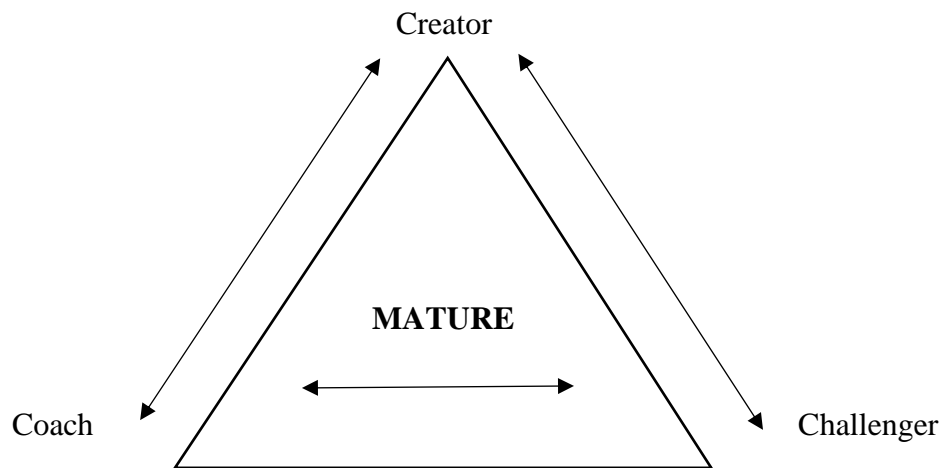


Figure 3.3 illustrates how the naïve mindset can change to a mature mindset and move personal authority from disablement to a place of empowerment. The previous naïve mindset with its properties is deleted by stepping into a more mature mindset.

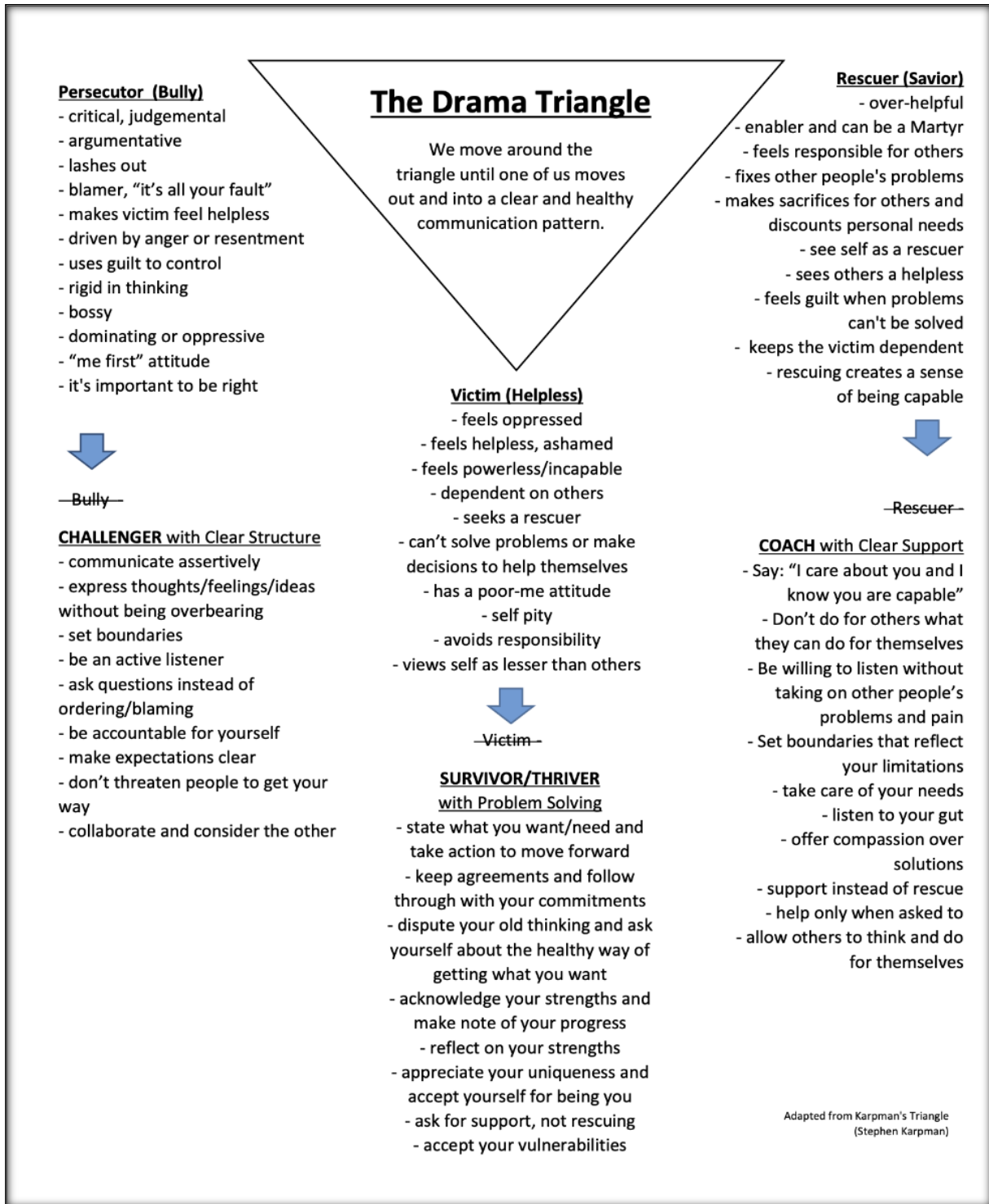


Figure 3.3: The Drama Triangle
Source: Kissell (2020), adapted from Karpman (1968).

Figure 3.3 summarises how the Challenger deletes and changes the initial Persecutor or Bully into someone with a clear structure and challenges others to do better and help them do so (Sanei, 2020). Persecutors try to force or manipulate others to do what they want (Aboiron,

2019; Mackie, 2019). The new Challenger behaviour involves doing and asserting, giving constructive feedback, initiating negotiations, and taking positive action without punishing others (Karpman, 1968).

The helpless Victim adopts a survivor and thriver approach, turning into the Creator that allows people to use their energy to build something new. Creators are mentally mature people, vulnerable but not needy (Sanei, 2020). They accept their situation, take responsibility for the problem, and function healthfully with content and resilience (Mackie, 2019). Thus, Creators put thought into what they want and how to get it and then take action to make it happen (Lac & Donaldson, 2020).

The Coach turns sympathy into empathy and helps others change their circumstances (Lac & Donaldson, 2020). Furthermore, Coaches do not allow fears, obligations, and guilt to control them or be manipulated into caring for people when they are not ready (Clark, 2020; Aboiron, 2019). The Rescuer should, instead of overthinking issues, take the lead and, instead of doing more than their fair share, be a supportive and empathetic listener. The Coach allows people to take the lead and only assists when people ask for it. Therefore, Coaches show concern and care but avoid problem-solving (Mackie, 2019).

3.2.3 Personal authority

Personal authority does not come from unkept promises but rather by truthful actions and deeds with decent and fair purpose – Orlov (2020).

Personal authority with its related concepts of emotional intelligence, personal identity and self-esteem is discussed as part of the theoretical framework linking human niches, how people think and how they behave in times of crisis (section 1.8, section 3.2.1 and section 3.2.2). People are often willing to surrender authority to their spouse, relatives, friends, colleagues, the company, and the government. However, relational values should not be yielded for personal authority or the power to take control over one's life or others' lives (CCG, 2019). Burke and Stets (2009) stressed that surrendering one's authority implies losing a sense of responsibility and accountability, which could have far-reaching consequences for the person and community (Milgram, 1965). Mindsets and social behaviour are contagious because many individuals follow others to conform (King, 2020). Typically, obedience to external authority and compliance to social pressures may gain approval, avoid rejection, or ensure fitting into the group. Consequently, authority roleplay, such as in the Drama Triangle, may influence people's attitudes and behaviours towards others either negatively or positively (Milgram & Gudehus, 1978). Personal authority claims the right to speak into the lives of others through earned trust, loyalty, and a deep understanding of their visions and values (Hollis, 2020).

Williamson (2002:4) asserted that personal authority in the family system relates to discovering how to "remember a different future." The implication is that people learn how to reconstruct the story of their past and allow new possibilities for a healthier future behaviour to develop in their minds. The African female dilemma is blending personal authority with emancipation while embracing and cherishing family heritage to emotionally transcend to a new self in the present generation (Williamson, 2002). To a certain degree, some families still act like cults demanding financial help from those that work, obedience to the elders, and submitting to political and cultural leaders while living in a different environment. Disobedience is not tolerated, and different opinions are not readily accepted (Deikman, 1989). These beliefs keep the African female acting like a Victim in the Drama Triangle, playing the child in a parent-grandparent

relation while having to work and care for the family (Williamson, 2002). She might continue the roleplay throughout her lifetime unless internal or external interventions extend her Value System beyond the known (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Cherry, 2021).

Personal authority needs *emotional intelligence* (EI) or emotional competence (section 1.8.3). Goleman (1998:36, 38, 76) defines EI as leaders having the competence to recognise, understand, and manage emotions influencing people's behaviour and obedience and surrendering personal authority to momentarily conform to the group (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). EI ensures good relationships, effective teamwork, leading people, and anticipating the future (Goleman, 1996). A strong EI enables performing uncomfortable conversations without hurting feelings, managing emotions when under stress or overwhelmed, and improving relationships with people that a person care for (Cast & Burke, 2002).

At work, EI helps resolve conflicts, coach and motivate employees, create a collaborative culture, and build psychological safety within teams (Hollis, 2020). Moreover, self-control is the effective management of disruptive emotions and impulses or the buffering of negative emotions favouring mood enhancement. Resilience is the foundation of self-control (Vötter, 2020). It calms angry reactions when workers are confronted with fluctuations in company schedules and suppresses selfish personal needs for organisational goals (Abraham, 2004). Hoffman and Compton (2019) upheld that EI training is essential for employees to display emotions desired by the organisation. Hence, emotionally competent people emit self-confidence, making them good leaders and active team players. Furthermore, employees with solid EI maintain an optimistic outlook on life, which helps them overcome barriers. Their ability to delay gratification and manage stress, anger, envy and other negative emotions help workers to build constructive relationships and complete tasks (Barnwell, 2015).

Personal identity, self-view, and self-awareness relate to the fundamental values that determine people's choices in, for instance, personal relationships and careers (Burke & Stets, 2009). Behavioural expectations develop over time and may evolve drastically depending on a person's life direction. It could include aspects such as people having no control over where they grew up, the colour of their skin, how they spend their time, or what they believe. People may also reveal their identity by what they wear and how they interact socially (Serva & Clayton, 2021). Hence, a self-narrative is important to signify a past and present story, what group a person identifies with, what social role they embody, and what complications arise when one identifies with more than one political party, faith, or class (Olson, 2002). Personal choices may also change as people develop and age (Olson, 2002). They display self-awareness by realising and trusting their motives, emotions, preferences, and abilities (Serva & Clayton, 2021).

Self-esteem typically refers to a person's overall positive self-evaluation constituting competencies and worth (Gecas, 1982:1-33). Competency or efficacy-based self-esteem proposes the level at which people see themselves as capable and effective. In contrast, worth-based self-esteem depends on how individuals judge themselves as people of value (Cast & Burke, 2002). Therefore, self-esteem could be viewed as self-motivative if people's behaviour increases positive self-evaluation (Kaplan, 1975; Tesser, 1988). Furthermore, self-esteem may serve as a buffer to protect oneself against harmful expressions and experiences (Longmore & DeMaris, 1997) but declines when self-verification issues are persistently experienced (Swann, Stein-Seroussi & Giesler, 1992). According to Cast and Burke (2002:1043):

People seek opportunities (and the groups that provide them) to verify their identities. They avoid situations (and groups) where self-verification is problematic. Such efforts help individuals manage and maintain their self-esteem.

Therefore, self-esteem ensures self-motivation, organising, support for directional behaviour and accounts for creating and maintaining group relations (Cast & Burke, 2002).

Deci and Ryan (1985) refer to self-determination as the ability to make choices and the ambition to manage one's life. Consequently, it plays a vital role in people's psychological health and well-being. Motivational change involves biological, emotional, and cognitive factors that activate behaviour and drive action (Nevid, Rathus & Greene, 2013). Motivation also involves persistence, determination, and the passion for driving decisions in the right direction (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Motivated people persist with a task long enough to achieve their goal, while motivation intensity depicts how strong their efforts are. However, the intensity of job performance is unlikely to achieve favourable outcomes unless channelled in a direction that benefits the organisation's goals (Pichler, 2020:183-213). Furthermore, Saeed and Asghar's (2012) research findings indicated that job performance is increased by organisational training that enhances people's competencies and knowledge. Thus, motivation and the appropriate work environment are essential for employee training to achieve the desired job performance.

The theoretical framework, including Spiral Dynamics, Karpman's Drama Triangle, and personal authority, introduced human niches and thinking systems, people's responses to stressful situations, and how they could motivate themselves to change their life circumstances. The Literature Review that follows will broaden insights on poverty and working poverty before focusing on African females in the South African contract cleaning industry, the efficacy of poverty reduction, and strategies and recommendations for uplifting the working poor. Additionally, it will focus on understanding the South African social situation to derive a competency-building framework as a proposal and resolve for African female contract cleaners in the company of discussion.

3.3 LITERATURE REVIEW

The Literature Review was paused until after the grounded theory, primarily rooted in raw data from 22 personal in-depth interviews, a focus group discussion with career progressors (in late May 2021), and a focus group discussion with experts or career advancers (in June 2021) in the company. The Literature Review aims to elevate the grounded theory to a more abstract level and enable the researcher to contextualise, compare, and contrast the grounded theory findings with existing literature around the upliftment of the working poor in South Africa. Therefore, the focus of this chapter turns to critically interrogate theoretical concepts and constructs relating to the poor and working poor in South Africa.

3.3.1 Introduction

Poverty definitions have extended over the years from signifying a state of bare survival to considering access to resources for people's self-esteem and full participation in the broader society (SPII, 2009). Aspects to consider are, amongst others, dignity, social connection, and social protection. There are different approaches to poverty, the working poor, measuring poverty, and mechanisms for the upliftment of the working poor (Samuel *et al.*, 2018; Roelen, 2017). Some of these aspects have been debated in Chapter 1. In early 2006, the

Studies in Poverty and Inequality Institute (SPII) entered discussions with the government, civil society, and academics in South Africa to reason about developing and implementing policies for eradicating poverty and inequality and the effects these issues have on people's lives (SPII, 2009). Different aspects of poverty will be defined and contextualised to support the study on African female working poverty in the cleaning services industry in South Africa. Recommendations for poverty relief and eradication from the literature will appear at the end of each discussion.

3.3.1.1 *Poverty and dignity*

Poverty and the upliftment from poverty have primarily focused on material lack and resources needed for survival. However, a multi-dimensional discussion on poverty has indicated that social isolation and shame inherently manifest poverty and undermine human dignity and respect (Matthews, 2020; Sykes, Križ, Edin & Halpern-Meekin, 2015). According to Samuel *et al.* (2018), total exclusion and lower levels of education for poor children and people with disabilities create barriers to obtaining decent work in adulthood. Moreover, unemployment is a determinant of poverty and job loss may cause people to slide back into survival mode (Zizzamia, 2018). Although studies on poverty have proposed different requirements to prevent people from failing, human dignity is essential for building personal authority (Roelen, 2017).

Poor people need inclusion or deep social connectedness and participation in the community to build self-esteem, self-respect, and autonomy (Matthews, 2020; Zizzamia, 2018). However, society considers the poor incapable of participating when encountering suffering (Leibbrand *et al.*, 2016), especially when experiencing a lack of income that causes them to lose dignity. In the broader sense, poverty appears to be multi-dimensional, including housing, health, education, and access to services and resources distinctly termed "social capital" (Samuel *et al.*, 2018). Furthermore, people need engagement with influential people to ensure political and public inclusion (Francis, Valodia & Webster, 2020; Sulla & Zikhali, 2018; Feder & Yu, 2020), which is difficult for the African female poor to obtain.

State intervention through welfare grants has mitigated poverty and, to a lesser degree, inequality, stigma and a lack of dignity, respect, and the subjective well-being of disadvantaged African women (Roelen, 2017). However, persistent levels of poverty and human rights violations raised the argument on what can be done to focus on African females' rights, dignity, equality, and social protection as the basis of policymaking (Matthews, 2020). Simultaneously, state contributions have altered the responsibility of childcare in the South African social dynamics. Family support, childcare, and social grant dependency create tension and personal conflict in family relations (Moore & Seekings, 2019). Issues on male absence and responsibility and child support will be discussed later.

3.3.1.2 *Deprivation and social exclusion*

Deprivation reflects how being underprivileged limits what a person can and cannot do and what people need for immediate and future accomplishments (SPII, 2009). Social exclusion is closely linked to deprivation and economic segregation or marginalisation from mainstream economic, social, and political activities (SPII, 2009). In addition, total exclusion and typical lower levels of education for poor children and adults, often because of stigma, create barriers to finding dignified well-paid work in adulthood. Therefore, social exclusion directly translates to an enabler and a predictor of poverty (Samuel *et al.*, 2018). A study by Jaka and Shava (2018) indicated that most women are still excluded from competitive markets, legal access to

credit facilities, entrepreneurial education, and the use of technology. Failure to counteract the imbalances between partial and full citizenship in a transforming society where conflict is premised on perceptions of inequality and exclusion and political promises of integration will counteract efforts to resolve it (Burns *et al.*, 2018). It became clear that social citizenship requires the right to economic welfare and security and living as a human being with civil, political, and social rights.

The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF, 2020) released multiple deprivation analyses on child poverty in South Africa based on Statistics South Africa's Living Conditions Survey (Stats SA, 2017). The upper-bound poverty line was used as a basis (section 1.2.1.1 and section 3.3.8.3). Findings indicated that 67 % of all deprived children were from low-income families who lacked the social infrastructure for an emerging mind's healthy and active development (Matthews, 2020; Patel, 2019). Deprivation includes, amongst other things, a lack of nutritious food, sub-standard housing, travelling long distances to the nearest health centre, and living in communities with an inadequate supply of water, electricity, and waste disposal (UNICEF, 2020). The list below was adapted from the UNICEF report (2020) to include the essential requirements for health and development.

- i. Source of drinking water.
- ii. Hygiene and sanitation.
- iii. Type of waste disposal.
- iv. Type of housing, which includes building materials for shelter.
- v. Kind of energy used for cooking and lighting.
- vi. Nutrition according to expected household-level food security.
- vii. Protection (recent crime befalling any household member).
- viii. Health (accessibility to the nearest health centre).
- ix. Access to information (radio, television, and internet).
- x. Child development (exposure to early childhood education before primary school).
- xi. Education (distance from school, school attendance, lateness (age) in school or age to grade appropriateness, and other school facilities).

It was found that children reared in female-headed households were, on average, 20 % more deprived of basic needs than children growing up in male-headed households (UNICEF, 2020). Kobayashi *et al.* (2017) indicated that many older adults who grew up during the South African Apartheid years in poverty conditions and whose fathers worked in unskilled manual labour had relatively poor cognitive assessment outcomes. Samuel *et al.* (2018) stated that education strongly predicts cognitive outcomes and social stratification, implying where people will work and live. Moreover, many women depend on other women for social and childcare support. Some women in rural areas manage complex households while involved in multiple livelihood strategies (Jaka & Shava, 2018; Kobayashi, 2017). Child support grants were only introduced in 1998 for children under seven and gradually extended to children up to 18 years old (Hall, 2021). Because child support grants are insufficient to confront the totality of material deprivation, many households remain without sufficient basic needs such as food, while others

experience high levels of debt (Matthews, 2020; Patel, 2019). These findings are alarming as most participants involved in the personal in-depth interviews for this study indicated that they had been or their children were reared by their grandparents (mostly grandmothers) in rural areas where multi-dimensional poverty conditions are rife.

The UNICEF (2020) report advised the South African government to:

- i. Continue investing in the country's social infrastructure, especially where health and school facilities require substantial upgrading.
- ii. Understand that poor children suffer multiple deprivations and that a sustained focus on financing the social services grants sector should remain high on the priority list.
- iii. Finalise, without delay, the implementation of South Africa's expanded social protection base.

3.3.1.3 Inequality

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed deep inequalities in the South African society, with the poorest of the poor severely impacted by the disease. The government's extended lockdown to delay the spreading of the disease had catastrophic impacts on the economy and public health (Enserink & Kupferschmidt, 2020). Along with a Gini coefficient of 63, the World Bank (2021a; 2021b) ranked South Africa the most inequitable globally. Low-income earners and the unemployed carry the brunt of inequity while displaying increased levels of frustration and desperation. Emotions culminated in the looting spree instigated by former South African president Zuma's jail sentence (WIEGO, 2020). Furthermore, despite identifying people with co-morbidities, aged people, and demographic groups being more vulnerable to death from COVID-19, there was significantly less appreciation for inequalities in infrastructure and resources that affected the poor's exposure to COVID-19 (De Groot & Lemanski, 2021).

Inequality is linked to social exclusion as unequal access is allowed to political and socio-economic rights and an imbalance in the distribution of resources (Francis *et al.*, 2020). Milanović (2018) distinguished between two forces that even out inequality: malign forces, such as wars, natural catastrophes, and epidemics and benign forces containing widely accessible education and increased social transfers through progressive taxes. However, the COVID-19 pandemic globally exacerbated inequalities driving those at risk into complete poverty (Francis *et al.*, 2020).

Statistics confirmed that contract and informal labour market workers, primarily females, have suffered higher unemployment, lower monthly incomes, and more precarious work conditions than people working in other sectors (Matthews, 2020). Simultaneously, the COVID-19 crisis disproportionately impacted women who lost their jobs and needed to care for their families (Francis *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, Frances *et al.* were adamant that policy proposals must address female inequalities for a more equal and fair working society and resilient economy. Jain *et al.* (2020), in their investigation of the COVID-19 labour market impacts, measured a 40 % nett decline in active employment. Half this figure was accounted for by increases in non-employment and temporary layoffs. Women with low-level education and in manual occupations, informal workers, and the working poor faced the most significant employment losses. Therefore, through training and competency building, economic empowerment seems the most significant way to address a multi-dimensional poverty problem (Schnabel, 2021). However, the South African business and government displayed little realistic economic empowerment of the rural and urban female workforce.

3.3.1.4 Vulnerability and insecurity

Vulnerability and insecurity are often used interchangeably for situations in which people cannot cope with threats to their well-being (SPII, 2009). Moreover, social vulnerability comprises the susceptibility of social groups to potential losses from extreme events and their inability to absorb and withstand these impacts (Team & Manderson, 2020). The social system depicts two properties, namely its sensitivity (how severely a shock or event impacts it) and its resilience or adaptivity capacity. Hence, people become vulnerable when systems for their livelihoods become delicate and risky (De Groot & Lemanski, 2021; UN, 2018). For example, the COVID-19 lockdowns have globally heightened the risk of exposure for women and girls to gender-based violence in the home (UN Women, 2020; SASPEN, 2020). In South Africa, one week into the hard lockdown, more than 2 000 grievances were registered with the police, further intensifying the vulnerability of women and children during uncertain economic times (Sonke Gender Justice, 2020; Fouché, Fouché & Theron, 2020). In response, the South African government introduced several relief measures, including extending the country's children support grant and temporary employee relief scheme (TERS) benefits (Matthews, 2020).

Structural vulnerability derives from economic exploitation and discrimination (Team & Manderson, 2020). Vulnerability in employment features a person's work structure and capability to work under certain conditions indicating the difference between work and income, especially for those who are unable or living far from work (Peterman *et al.*, 2020). It comprises variances in how individuals and households assemble a livelihood and cope or cannot cope with the risks that push them closer to indisputably poor (Bhorat *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, people need empowerment and entitlement that offer them skills to apply for freedom and resilience (Fouché, Fouché & Theron, 2020). The advantage of an entitlement approach to social support covers situations where populations are constantly vulnerable to food shortages, even with no additional environmental drivers (Paul, 2013). The result is that scarcities and other crises increase where rights or entitlement fail. Palmer (2017) recommended that development planners and aid providers focus on improving the well-being of the most vulnerable by empowering them economically, socially, and politically.

Extreme poverty and structural violence have been reduced in countries where authorities focus on the vulnerable non-poor or near-poor (Shepherd *et al.*, 2019). Moreover, Vidojević and Chipkin (2021) reasoned that the South African ANC government's current welfare model is underpinned by a naïve concept of the South African economy as potentially fast-growing and labour-absorbing across all skill types. As a result, jobless men are effectively excluded from social protection, partly fuelling the violence against women and children (Vidojević, and Chipkin, 2021; Peterman *et al.*, 2020). Jewkes (2002:1424-1429) stated his concern about male identity and violence against women:

An inability to meet social expectations of successful manhood can trigger a male identity crisis. Violence against women is a means of resolving this crisis because it allows expression of power that is otherwise denied.

As a resolve, Vidojević and Chipkin (2021) proposed a Universal Basic Income Grant for mass structural unemployment in South Africa. Furthermore, Diwakar, Shepherd and Salomon (2020), in an international response to COVID-19, proposed a comprehensive data collection and analysis to reflect COVID-19-related risks and impact, followed by frequent measurements of poverty and vulnerability in populations with intersecting inequalities. The proposal was

echoed by Zizzamia, Jain, Budlender and Bassier (2020) in their report on the labour market and poverty impacts of COVID-19 in South Africa.

Another concern for Shepherd *et al.* (2019) was the large amount of alcohol consumption amongst the poor posing constraints to a permanent escape from vulnerability. Consequently, poor households need social and psychological assistance to help them resist impoverishment arising from numerous vulnerabilities and risks.

3.3.1.5 Chronic and transitory poverty (Poverty cycle)

Monetary and multidimensional poverty and deprivation are rife in fragile, vulnerable, conflict-affected, and violent situations (CPAN, 2015; Bowen *et al.*, 2020). Chronic poverty entails being in a state of extreme poverty persisting over the years or a lifetime and is often transmitted intergenerationally (Shepherd *et al.*, 2019:9). Diwakar *et al.* (2020:8) forecast that by 2030, up to 80 % of the world's severely poor will be living in fragile and violent countries like Yemen, Somalia, South Sudan, and Syria if no proper action is taken. These forecasts become a concern when focusing on South Africa, where violence, demonstrations and uprisings are common. Moreover, as discussed earlier, chronic poverty is frequently passed on to children across several generations (Dubay, 2020). Both chronic and transitory poverty manifestations are imperative as indicators to provide a basis for research on the dynamics of escaping the poverty cycle.

Transitory unemployment (section 1.1.3), with ensuing poverty, occurs when workers have periods of employment followed by long periods of unemployment (Wakefield, Yu & Swanepoel, 2022). It also results when the poor are employed on a day-to-day or contract-job basis and dismissed when the contract ends. Thus, some people transition in and out of poverty, while others remain rooted in chronic poverty (Kruger, 2018). Most transitory and chronically unemployed individuals in South Africa share similar characteristics, African females with inadequate secondary education and households consisting of five or more unemployed members (Kruger 2018; Wakefield *et al.*, 2022). These poverty-stricken households most likely survive on social grant income or mediocre non-income welfare grants.

Furthermore, many households are negatively affected by factors driving inter-generational poverty transmission (Shepherd *et al.*, 2019), such as a lack of childhood nutrition causing stunting and wasting (le Roux, Nel & Walsh, 2020.) As a result, poverty-affected children tend to suffer adult obesity, lower cognitive capacity and less physical strength (Jensen, Berens & Nelson, 2017). In addition, the poor typically engage in more demanding and strenuous jobs as the likelihood of gaining education skills and high-skilled employment is low (Modjadji & Madiba, 2019). The Overseas Development Institute (ODI, 2019) report focused on policies and approaches to assist people out of poverty through the informal economy and women's economic empowerment programme (Shepherd *et al.*, 2019). The ODI report recommends:

- (i) Developing an enabling environment for growth and sustainability to help people escape poverty. All programmes should include macro-economic policies alongside anti-discrimination actions, infrastructure and human development, and social protection.
- (ii) Political parties need special efforts to balance their interests through civil society and development partners.
- (iii) Keeping children in education as long as possible.

- (iv) Confronting fraud and corruption (ODI, 2019).

3.3.1.6 Poverty relief, poverty alleviation, and poverty reduction

Knowledge of these terms is essential when pursuing mechanisms for the upliftment of the poor, as they are often interchangeable and confusing. Poverty relief includes policies and interventions offering short-term assistance to people living in poverty (Zizzamia *et al.*, 2020; SPII, 2009). Poverty relief is thus the reaction to external impediments that push poor people into a severe state of vulnerability (Matthews, 2020:3), such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The UN World Food Programme (WFP, 2021) forecasts that 270 million people will become food insecure and need emergency relief by 2030 (UN WFP, 2021). In South Africa, poverty relief programmes include amongst others, the Department of Social Development's short-term Social Relief of Distress Grant, which includes monthly allowances, food parcels, and environmental relief help (Matthews, 2020). These policies are not intended to be developmental but to aid and address emergencies and urgent situations causing human suffering or imminently threatening livelihoods (SPII, 2009; UN WFP, 2021).

Poverty alleviation and poverty reduction aim to reduce the negative impact of poverty on the lives of the poor and are more sustainable and permanent than poverty relief programmes (Sofu & Wicks, 2017; SPII, 2009). According to the World Bank's (2019) brief on poverty reduction in Africa, the number of Africans living in extreme poverty has decreased substantially owing to poverty alleviation programmes. However, the number of poor people in Africa has increased because of high population growth. The fertility rate average of 4.8 births per woman thus prevents poverty reduction in Sub-Saharan Africa (Beegle & Christiaensen, 2019). According to research findings by Atake and Ali (2019), prestige, insurance for old age, and remaining children in case of child death influence the choice between fertility and empowerment of married women under 35 years old in Sub-Saharan Africa. Therefore, the World Bank (2019) recommended strategies and policies to reduce the number of people living in poverty.

- (i) Introducing cost-effective interventions, such as family-planning programmes, clinics, and increased female education and income opportunities to cultivate empowerment (offering life skills, addressing social norms around gender, and reducing child marriages). According to the World Bank (2019), fewer children per family allow families and governments to invest more in each child's human capital. Atake and Ali (2020) also indicated that empowered women want fewer children than their less empowered counterparts.
- (ii) Government should address the poverty financing gap by dedicating more funding and upliftment expenditure on the poor and their facilities.
- (iii) Government should leverage growth through digital technology, solar power, access to affordable and reliable information and communication technology, energy, and transport infrastructure and services (World Bank, 2019).
- (iv) Businesses and the government should invest in skills creation and transformation on foundational and digital terrain.

- (v) Enabling women empowerment through education, competency building and paid employment. In addition, income-generating facilities should be developed to enhance the socioeconomic standing of households. Women's ability should be improved to take control of their lives and the number of children born into the household (Atake & Ali, 2019).

South Africa's social grant programmes alleviate the impact of poverty on a countless number of vulnerable people (Sofu & Wicks, 2017). These grants have become a significant source of income for many poor households and significantly cushioned large households from the overwhelming effects of poverty (Satumba, Bayat & Mohammed, 2017). Furthermore, social grant policies do not only provide immediate relief but contain developmental stimuli to empower those living in households with children, the disabled, and the elderly receiving social grants. It enables people to search for jobs or start small businesses (Shepherd *et al.*, 2019; Sofu & Wicks, 2017). Households with old-aged grant recipients also have better labour market and poverty outcomes than those with child grant recipients alone (Mackett, 2020). Social grants help children consume more nutritious food for healthier growth and brain development (UN, 2021).

Because labour is often the only asset for the poor to improve their well-being, it is crucial to generate employment opportunities to ensure poverty reduction and sustainable economic and social development (Feder, 2019; UN, 2021). Thus, from a social perspective, the best way to develop socio-economic strength, eradicate poverty, and develop personal well-being is through decent work, increased employment rates, and increasing the minimum wage. The UN (2021) recommendations for businesses and governments include:

- (i) Creating more quality and valuable job opportunities, mainly where the uneducated poor are involved.
- (ii) Mechanisms for job creation include investing in labour-intensive industries, encouraging employment structures to heighten productivity, and upgrading the quality of jobs in the informal economy.
- (iii) Providing the poor, especially women, with the necessary skills and assets to expand their competencies and employment potential (UN, 2021).

3.3.2 The increasing levels of working poverty in South Africa

Since the 2000s, there has been a global rise in working poverty, with South Africa cited as the world's most unequal country (section 3.3.1.3) (World Bank, 2021). Inequality is exposed by income- and wealth-creation and growing levels of poverty (Feder & Yu, 2020). Statistics on COVID-19-related unemployment and job termination have impacted South Africa as a developing country and a growing labour market concern (Jain *et al.*, 2020). Despite a lapse of 27 years since the 1994 non-racial election of a democratic government and freedom for which 19.7 million South Africans voted (Tracey, 2016), small businesses and the working poor are still unlikely to succeed in escaping poverty. Besides, a 27-year African business owner stated on Freedom Day, 27 April 2021:

I do not have much to celebrate because of what is happening at this time in the country, simply because people that are in power are corrupt. I do not celebrate freedom (SABC News, 2021c).

Young people who were discouraged from voting in the 2014 national elections provided reasons such as political withdrawal due to low levels of confidence in the government and its lack of response to their demands. In addition, there was a decline in support for the ruling party and an increase in dissatisfaction with other political party options and offerings (Tracey, 2016). South Africa has experienced unemployment, crime and corruption, poor infrastructure and service delivery, and unsatisfactory education (Jain *et al.*, 2020; Wilson & Magam, 2018).

In the local government elections of November 2021, voter withdrawal peaked at a critical level, with around one-third of eligible voters registered and 12 million out of 42.6 million eligible voters having voted (van der Westhuizen, 2021). Furthermore, the economic devastation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic elevated the unemployment rate to 44.4 % at election time. This number includes jobless people who ceased searching for work (van der Westhuizen, 2021). Furthermore, the struggle for survival is becoming tougher when dealing with deteriorating municipal services, such as water and sanitation (Jain *et al.*, 2020). Accordingly, corruption and infrastructure collapse pose significant threats to lives and livelihoods (Auditor General, SA, 2021), while load shedding has become a common issue (BusinessTech, 2021a). As a result, the working poor has become grateful for any job in the hope of escaping poverty.

A work-first strategy has shaped numerous employee and welfare transformations (Boschman, Maas, Vrooman & Kristiansen, 2021). It builds on the idea that any job is acceptable to succeed in the labour market as long as the person gains work ethics and skills through learnerships rather than formal education (Schnabel, 2021). Thus, work-first programmes share a strong message that employment is a goal and an expectation. Paid employment has often been the predominant and most sustainable way of dragging people out of poverty (Feder & Yu, 2020). Although career advancement for low-wage and low-skilled workers in a company is limited, the perception is that these jobs are steppingstones towards a better job for those experiencing unemployment (Schnabel, 2021; Knabe & Plum, 2010:20). However, low-wage employment is not self-correcting and might negatively affect those stuck in low-level jobs (Knabe & Plum, 2010). Employment no longer guarantees poverty reduction as low wages are crippling and insufficient for people to work themselves out of poverty (Feder & Yu, 2020). The unemployed might find conflicting choices between a dignified job and reality (Dawson & Fouksman, 2020).

Table 3.1 illustrates universal thinking around advocating and accepting a low-wage job as a first step towards a more lucrative job, including the advantages and disadvantages. There are no right or wrong suggestions regarding whether a person should accept a low-wage job. It depends on the person's life and work conditions and different opinions about taking a low-paid job to obtain a promotion soon (Fouksman, 2020; Schnabel, 2021).

Table 3.1: Advantages and disadvantages of low-wage work

Advantages	Disadvantages
Having a low-paid job may be better than having no job at all.	Individuals can be trapped in low-paid jobs.
Accepting low-paid jobs prevents scarring effects of unemployment that could create long-term problems for the worker.	Accumulation of human capital while working in low-quality jobs is often limited.
Low-paid employment may serve as a stepping stone into higher-paid employment, for instance, by improving an individual's employment-related skills.	Employers may interpret low-paid jobs in an individual's employment history to be an indicator of low productivity.
For less qualified or long-term unemployed persons, low-paid jobs may offer a suitable way to re-integrate them into the labour market.	Accepting low-paid employment may be a negative signal, particularly for qualified workers, though it may be less of a problem for other unemployed persons.
	Low-paid employment can drive individuals into repeated spells of unemployment, resulting in a low-pay, no-pay cycle.

Source: Schnabel (2021:1).

Low-wage employment and working poverty have become associated with poor working conditions and job insecurity for those who need any job to survive (Feder, 2019). These conditions may include working environments adverse to employee health and safety, employer discrimination, too long or too few working hours, inadequate opportunities for skills development, and a lack of legal protection to ensure sustained employment (Bryson & Freeman, 2013; Feder & Yu, 2020). Schnabel (2021) proposed promoting 'good firms' that invest in training and provide better job and remuneration opportunities.

3.3.2.1 Perspectives on the increase of working poverty in South Africa

Working poverty poses a challenge for the South African government and society since poverty relief through rapid job creation for the unemployed seemed the solution (Feder, 2019; Yu, 2019). However, low-wage employment does not often cover basic needs for financial security (Crib, 2019). Most minimum wages are below the requirements for maintaining a decent living standard though it is a fair hourly wage negotiated between the unions and bargaining councils (Feder & Yu, 2020). Moreover, many workers reluctantly accept a part-time or low-paid job as a temporary outcome due to not finding a full-time, well-paid and respectable job offering or learnership (Boschman *et al.*, 2021). Nevertheless, if low-paid employment is understood as a temporary arrangement, labour market policies need to address working poverty rather than preventative social policies (Fouksman, 2020; Schnabel, 2021). In addition, intermittent work

and low working hours play just an important role in working poverty as low wages (Filandri & Struffolino, 2018). Working poverty underlines the importance of household structure, including the number of dependent children and other household members, number of breadwinners, number of pensioners receiving grants, and work-life balance (Lilenstein *et al.*, 2018).

Several unemployed or marginally employed young men in urban districts in South Africa were interviewed to understand what they think about labour, income, and family care (Dawson & Fouksman, 2020). Many of these men refuse to financially support their children as they believe the minimum wage assigned to caregivers is too low for a man to take care of his family. They also judged women and foreigners for accepting low-paid jobs (Jain *et al.*, 2020). Consequently, only women (as caregivers) receive child support grants, while older women and men receive pensioner grants. African males hold a long-standing impression that wage labour and social gender order are based on the male as the breadwinner (Hunter, 2011). Despite some men making substantial money as small business entrepreneurs, they blame the abandonment of their paternal responsibilities on social grants, having substituted the man's role as the provider (Ferguson & Li, 2018).

Consequently, male voices echoed widespread anger, anxiety, and social insecurity over the end of a gender hierarchy based on male breadwinners, the mass convergence of unemployment, female emancipation, the labour market (though the more poorly paid end), and the distribution of social grants to mothers and elderly females (Dubbeld, 2013). These men entered the Drama Triangle as Angry men or Persecutors that blame the social security system and young and older women for limiting their future and their inability or unwillingness to deliver. Although these men acknowledge the centrality of the state in creating wealth and distribution of resources, they dispute who deserves to receive a share, which according to them, should be the men engaging in wage labour or some sort of entrepreneurship (Dawson & Fouksman, 2020). Conversely, the South African government has implemented a social grant system that explicitly excludes people who are physically capable of working. At the same time, the privileged political fear the poor remaining dependent on the welfare state rather than supporting the archetypical workers or entrepreneurs growing the economy (Dawson & Fouksman, 2020; Ferguson & Li, 2018).

The total number of South Africans receiving permanent social grants has increased to more than 31 % of the population (Granlund & Hochfeld, 2020). In 2021, more than 19 million, or about a third of South African citizens, relied on social grants (BusinessTech, 2021c). Moreover, these figures did not include the growing number of temporary grant recipients of 7 million and more who received Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grant pay-outs since 2020 (Head, 2021). The concern is that millions of other family members also rely on these social grant recipients (Dawson & Fouksman, 2020).

Social stability and permanence are critical factors in the preference of education, qualifications, and a job over grants. The hope is that once the working poor and unemployed are educated, they will have better social mobility, security and job prospects (Dawson & Fouksman, 2020). Thus, education, quality job creation, and employment seem indispensable mechanisms for economic recovery. In addition, South Africa's national and local governments run various training, wage-subsidy, and public work programmes to increase employment (Granlund & Hochfeld, 2020). However, many unemployed do not attend these programmes because of the low wages. These wages cannot lift the working poor above the poverty line. Consequently, most efforts have largely failed to impact unemployment, low-wage employment, and inequality (Fouksman, 2020; Ranchhod & Finn, 2015).

3.3.2.2 Recommendations for the business and government

In their research Feder (2019), Feder & Yu (2020) and Yu (2019) suggested how the government could address the working poverty issues. These mechanisms are discussed in line with the findings and recommendations from research by Peer, Lombard and Levitt (2020) and Parikh, Jijo and Aritua from the World Bank Group (2018).

- (i) The businesses and government must concentrate on policies that provide intensive and affordable quality education and skills training to previously disadvantaged communities. Therefore, they should focus on labour market skills and competencies for particular jobs with the possibility of a decent internship or entrepreneurship afterwards. Such a comprehensive policy approach should include effective labour market policies and life-long learning to increase workers' career progress to better-paid quality jobs (Schnabel, 2021).
- (ii) Policy directives must promote economic growth and infrastructure development within the informal sector. Hence, the government should increase awareness and enforce labour regulations that protect low-skilled, low-waged, and elementary labourers (Parikh *et al.*, 2018).
- (iii) Investments in infrastructure and rapid infrastructure development should lead to direct and indirect jobs leading to better employment, higher wages, and enhanced working conditions that extend into economic opportunities. However, investments into road networks and other infrastructure projects and their impact should be analysed explicitly to include complementary investments, such as industrial parks, agro-logistical services, intermediate processing, packaging and sorting of produce, and processing facilities. In addition, financial services, information and communication technology, and laws and regulations must be provided to unlock the potential of entrepreneurs and new markets (Peer *et al.*, 2020).
- (iv) The business and government must create quality jobs and transform unstable, low-paid jobs into more stable work environments with higher earnings. The effort should include transitioning from the informal to the formal sectors for those in working poverty. The informal sector includes employment and production in small and unregistered enterprises, marginalised and socially unprotected trades, and micro-businesses registered with the National Small Business Act 102 of 1996 (Katambwe, 2016).
- (v) Awareness of the minimum legal employment conditions between elementary occupation workers and employers should be stressed, and effective mechanisms should be created or enhanced to monitor and enforce compliance (Peer *et al.*, 2020).

- (vi) Managers should attend to their employees and let them know how important they are by genuinely caring about their success. They should recognise that making people feel important is essential to successful leadership. Therefore, they should set a personal goal to make others feel important; if for no other reason, it is the right thing to do (Dirani *et al.*, 2020).
- (vii) Considering that a lower sense of coherence is linked to adverse life events, alcohol misuse, which aggravates and perpetuates poverty and woman and child abuse, needs to be a priority for government policy action. Policymakers should provide programmes to improve coping mechanisms and promote problem-solving behaviours (Peer *et al.*, 2020; Shepherd *et al.*, 2019).

3.3.3 Perspectives on poverty and poverty reduction

Multiple perspectives of poverty, working poverty and poverty reduction have been developed. Ravallion (2016) debated a transition of mainstream thinking about poverty as unavoidable and natural because of some people not having the potential to be anything else than poor to poverty being regarded as a social disorder. An *economic* poverty perspective is a relative poverty measure determined by income below the poverty line, usually measured as insufficient income to buy a specified amount of food (Ravallion, 2016; Sofo & Wick, 2017) (section 1.2.2.1 and section 3.3.7.4). Such an approach perceives poverty as being unequal rather than a state of insufficiency where people lack all things deemed necessary (Sarlo, 2019). The *basic needs* perspective relates to a lack of basic needs to function appropriately, such as clean water, nutrition, health care, education, clothing, and shelter (Conway, 2016). Additionally, a *capability* or *empowerment* perspective on poverty and poverty reduction is perceived as the obligation of a community to provide social services to prevent poverty (Conway, 2016; UNESCO, 2016).

Furthermore, a *sociological* perspective on poverty focuses on the structure of the society relating to people's individual life conditions and social problems. A social-centric view of the cause of poverty thus relates to balancing the role of social structure, distribution of resources, personal authority, and people's moral failings (Sofo & Wicks, 2017:245; Shildrick & Rucell, 2015). These views explain poverty as a dependency culture, while others argue that poverty results from the unequal distribution of resources and opportunities across a society (Mahlert, 2020). Townsend's (1992:10) definition of poverty includes aspects of the Drama Triangle when he links poverty to an "income insufficient to enable individuals to "play the roles, participate in the relationships, and follow the typical behaviour expected of them by their membership of society" (Magnuson & Duncan, 2019). However, an argument against linking poverty to individual behaviours is that poverty is part of a series of interrelated issues, including unemployment and welfare. Not all unemployed people are poor, and many people living in poverty are working (Mahlert, 2020). Thus, a sociological learning and development perspective on poverty should be linked to individual and group decision-making that builds resilience and empowers those in poverty (Sofo & Wicks, 2017).

Sofo and Wicks (2017) proposed an *occupational* perspective on poverty to understand the causes and impact of poverty on people and communities other than the idea that poverty is deserved. Occupation refers to a person's performance, including interests, abilities and skills to use the tools, materials, and opportunities at their disposal (Duncan & Watson, 2009:10). Human energy, such as what and how to perform, can be applied to ensure community

solutions (Boland & Cunningham, 2019). Thus, the emphasis changes to what people can do and be when comparing opportunities for their well-being. People living in impoverished communities' risk occupational injustice due to conditions beyond their control and are deprived of choices between various occupations, which are the building blocks of livelihood (Boland & Cunningham, 2019). Life conditions critical for survival, such as securing food, can consume most of the poor's time and effort and restrict their participation in job and human development, special interests, skills development, and home learning (Magnuson & Duncan, 2019; Sofu & Wicks, 2017). Poverty further impacts knowledge about the occupations that impoverished communities can access, such as personal, social, cultural, and historical knowledge and choices (Duncan & Watson, 2009).

Feder and Yu (2020) studied the relationship between low-wage employment and poverty in South Africa. Their research findings indicated that low-wage employment, working poverty, and low-wage poverty groups predominantly comprise low-educated, middle-aged African females in the informal sector and elementary occupations. Low-wage workers include full-time employees, informal sector workers, service workers, intermittent workers, and underemployed workers (who want to work longer hours) (Crettaz & Bonoli, 2010). The sector also contains elementary occupations and those females who cannot work more than a few hours due to having children at home (Feder, 2019; Filandri & Struffolino, 2018.). These workers who face a larger risk of being unemployed and are stuck in low-wage poverty were found to run households with many children and unemployed members (Feder, 2019). Therefore, the three most important mechanisms contributing to workers' annual salary and exposure to working poverty are hourly wages, working hours per week or month, and the number of months worked per year. Thus, the main aspects influencing working poverty outside work are family structure, number of earners, presence and age of children, and cost of services, including child-care services (Filandri & Struffolino, 2018).

Knowledge of Spiral Dynamics (section 3.2.1) enhances the way people think about poverty and decision-making. Typically, a poverty Value System is explained by underlying patterns, such as decisions that serve immediate goals but are detached from future goals. Many decisions and behaviours associated with low-income groups are characterised by a preference for the present (not the future), focused on the actual (not the hypothetical), those socially close to them, and the 'here' (not places far away) (Beck *et al.*, 2018). Whereas some decisions might have harmful long-term results, such as the influence of alcohol abuse or unhealthy eating on health in old age; the poor need immediate comfort and a sense of social connectedness and belonging in the here and now (Shepherd, 2019; Sheehy-Skeffington & Rea, 2017). The literature proposed reshaping decision-making patterns associated with poverty and survival from being trifling and the result of psychosocial deprivation to being rational and adaptive for enhancing life conditions in the present and future (Beck *et al.*, 2018; Sheehy-Skeffington & Rea, 2017). The inference is that if African women could be emancipated, their acquired competencies could create opportunities for more lucrative jobs and better career planning.

3.3.4 Outsourced labour and contract cleaning

Organisations generally undertake outsourced labour as an economising and downsizing measure (Horwitz, 2019). They view outsourcing as a cost-cutting practice in which they sign contracts with outside companies to take over their employees and services traditionally performed in-house (Elkomy, Cookson & Jones, 2019). The essence of outsourcing is to contract and transfer responsibilities for internal functions, processes, and human relations to

an outside company to focus on core business (Bilan *et al.*, 2017). However, increased labour-hire and outsourcing might decrease employee work ethics and obligations and reduce the contract company's commitment to human resources development (Hall, 2013). Those who oppose outsourced labour argue the cause of more labourers having to take on domestic jobs because of a cut in labour costs, including staff salaries (Elkomy *et al.*, 2019). Moreover, supporters of outsourcing claim that it creates incentives for new companies and helps businesses maintain the nature of free-market economies, an economic system founded entirely on supply and demand with little or no government control (Investopedia, 2020; 2021).

Service providers have reconfigured contract cleaning into a multi-lateral employment relationship between the client, the management owner or cleaning services company, and the employees (du Toit, 2021). Sub-contracting occurs when a company hires an individual to perform a specialised task on a non-permanent basis, and the job is agreed upon by signing a contract (Investopedia, 2020; 2021). Thus, outsourcing physical cleaning tasks also involves outsourcing employment relations where organisational trust, control, and relationship power are passed on to the cleaning services company (du Toit & Heinecken, 2021). Although outsourced labour is an accepted practice throughout the world, the question has been whether it serves the interests of all people, especially the working poor in South Africa. The 2015 university student mobilisation around the events #OutsourcingMustFall was included in issues to eradicate exploitative outsourcing labour practices (Horwitz, 2019). While the protest spread across South African universities against the annual increase in student fees as the #FeesMustFall movement, low-paid and outsourced workers joined the protesting students to fight for the insourcing of all university workers (Luckett & Mzobe, 2016).

Horwitz (2019) performed a study on the ethics and impact of outsourcing, and the dilemma for the working poor at the University of Cape Town, described by Luckett and Mzobe (2016) as the pioneer of retrenchments and outsourcing. The research included 42 interviews with outsourced cleaners and security guards to investigate their perceptions of contracting as an employment practice. At the time, cleaning and security services had been the most outsourced practices in tertiary institutions. The research was based on the ethical argument that universities that take advantage and apply outsourced labour were reaping the benefits of cheaper labour and not taking responsibility for employee benefits, such as medical health insurance, pension, and sick leave (Horwitz, 2019). Outsourcing affected and shifted many unskilled university workers to services providers, negatively impacting their salary packages. The research participants reported facing exclusion, dismissal, victimisation, racism, and insufficient wage increases (Luckett & Mzobe, 2016). After the 2015 protests, conditions for outsourced workers were improved across all universities, varying from work conditions and remuneration of outsourced workers to 100 % wage increases to where all contracts with service providers were terminated (Horwitz, 2019).

Research findings from Horwitz (2019) and Luckett and Mzobe (2016) indicated that outsourced workers still experience discrimination and inequality on campuses while earning low wages with frequent marginalisation. Furthermore, the very existence of outsourced labour at a tertiary institution presents an ethical impasse that contradicts its values. However, Horwitz (2019) realised that confronting outsourced labour issues within the rise of living costs, job shortages, poverty, and unemployment in South Africa takes more than just responding to the needs of outsourced labourers, calling for a ban on labour brokers, and shutting down sub-contracting companies. The following recommendations were proposed.

- (i) Businesses and the government must stop supporting unethical labour practices in South Africa. The consequences of not acting against unjust and unethical outsourced companies are vast and lead to the continuation of inequality and an imbalanced society. “To be an ethical activist is to propagate for fair labour practice and promote national interest in South Africa” (Horwitz, 2019:56).
- (ii) Businesses that create fair and just conditions of service for outsourced workers could benefit from equitable employment. However, improving the conditions of outsourced workers requires first recognising their predicament and then showing commitment to move towards more equitable and fair employment practices.
- (iii) All outsourcing companies must add financial benefits to contract workers’ wages, such as medical aid, unemployment insurance, sick leave, annual salary raises, and annual leave.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF, 2021) reiterated that South Africans suffer the highest level of inequality manifested through a skewed income distribution (IMF, 2020). Although the authorities used different tools to lessen stubborn levels of inequality, low growth and a rising unemployment rate underwrite the persistence of inequality. According to the IMF (2020), South Africa will need fundamental reforms for more robust and inclusive growth. Implications are that if the South African businesses and government create a more favourable environment for private investment and job creation, inequality could be addressed more thoroughly. However, it would require improved governance, reducing operating costs, and exposing goods and services markets to competition. Furthermore, firms should be permitted to compensate workers according to their skills and productivity, and the efficiency of state-owned services must be confirmed. Firm policies must create opportunities to uplift the marginalised population through improved education, health and transportation (IMF, 2020).

3.3.5 The global contract cleaning industry

The promotion of human rights is not only about raising public awareness and conducting human rights education and training. The real impact of human rights promotion can be assessed through its incorporation in public policy discourse and policies themselves – Acharya, 2013: v).

Over the past two decades [since the 2000s], governments and businesses have transferred job responsibilities by outsourcing their non-core activities to private contractors. However, the question has remained whether outsourcing companies are held accountable for the practical application of human rights across all sectors (Acharya, 2013). For example, in Europe, the cleaning sector forms an integral part of the entire European economy. However, contract cleaners across the continent receive little attention, despite being adversely affected by aspects of society and the work environment (Van Hooren, 2020). The most significant factors impacting these contract cleaners are people’s low perceptions, low self-image, violence, working either alone or after hours, and psychosocial issues (Kuhl, 2017). In addition, the use of a large variety of chemicals and exposure to biological hazards, high risk of accidents (for example, slips, trips, falling from ladders, and harsh elements), and communication problems (sub-contracting, different workplaces, and a high percentage of immigrants) contribute to

impacting the cleaners' human rights and physical and psychological well-being (Acharya, 2013; Kuhl, 2017).

It has become a global issue that employees in the cleaning sector are among the worst-paid (Hsieh & Chen, 2020). The findings of an Australian study by Campbell and Peeters (2008) on the low pay, compressed work schedules, and high-intensity work of contract cleaners indicated that some cleaners could be working as little as two hours per day. It implies that even when hourly rates are reasonable, the income from one job is much too low. Moreover, low wages are further depleted by travelling costs entailing long and multiple journeys, often well after hours (Campbell & Peeters, 2008; Kuhl, 2017). These factors impact the cleaners' financial, emotional, and physical well-being. In contrast, Segal (2017) found that good management of the cleaning sector and managers' relationships with their cleaner colleagues contribute to job satisfaction.

The UK Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) published their findings of an inquiry into employment conditions in the cleaning sector in 2014. The report called cleaners the *invisible workforce* because most cleaners claimed they were seldomly greeted or acknowledged by people in the offices that they clean. These cleaners were rarely addressed by name, and those employees who did speak to them hardly ever said "please" or "thank you". Cleaners added that they were often made to feel 'the lowest of the low' (ECJ, 2019). The European cleaning industry employs more female, ethnic minority, migrant, and older workers than their average workforce.

In contrast, many workers reported being treated well, enjoyed their job, and agreed that their employment rights were upheld (EHRC, 2014). The indication was that some clients outsourced their cleaning services sensibly, signed contracts for lengthy periods, paid a living wage and respected the cleaners' working time [hours]. Moreover, these outsourcing companies treat the cleaners with fairness, dignity, and respect, the most appreciated value in most societies (EHRC, 2014).

Nevertheless, many workers did not have their employment rights upheld. Instead, they were bullied or discriminated against by supervisors, experienced problems obtaining their payments, received excessive workloads, and were not treated with dignity and respect (ECJ, 2019; EHRC, 2014). Procurement practices focus mainly on reducing costs while overlooking the negative impacts of staff turnover, absenteeism, productivity, and the quality-of-service delivery. Although a long list of good practices was added at the end of the EHRC report, this study will focus on the most crucial recommendations.

- (i) Improving working conditions for cleaners.
- (ii) Raising awareness of employment rights.
- (iii) Establishing more responsible procurement practices.
- (iv) Accepting a contemporary and comprehensive approach in which cleaners are involved to tackle the issues to instil new principles (Kuhl, 2017).

A brief discussion of the global cleaning services markets provided an insight into their cleaning labour issues before turning to the South African contract cleaning industry. This way, global

contract cleaners' perceptions, practices, and treatment could be compared with those in the South African contract cleaning industry.

3.3.6 The South African contract cleaning industry

South African contract cleaning companies that perform specialised cleaning and environmental management services to industrial, commercial, retail, food, and events customers have increased remarkably over the past two decades (Research & Markets, 2020). A growing number of businesses require clean and hygienic environments for successful performance and the safety of employees and consumers without wanting to engage in an economic structure of labour relations (du Toit & Heinecken, 2021). Hence, these organisations prefer outsourcing their tasks to specialised and experienced companies with the right equipment and trained staff while continuing with their core business. During the COVID-19 period, South African Revenue Service (SARS) took the unusual step of re-employing 769 contract cleaning staff as the best value proposition for the individuals when the outsourcing contract was terminated (SARS, 2020). SARS identified some of these employees for career advancement to position them where SARS vacancies become available. In addition, these employees will receive membership to the Government Employee Pension Fund, medical aid, and group life cover as part of their wage packages (SARS, 2020). These actions align with the study's aims to derive a competency-building framework for uplifting the African female working poor in the South African contract cleaning industry.

The National Contract Cleaners Association (NCCA) was constituted in 1987 as a national association and regulatory body for registered cleaning companies planning to participate in the contract cleaning tender processes (NCCA, 2021). Its mission is to deliver leadership to the industry and develop and set appropriate standards for contract cleaning services. The NCCA has been active in the Contract Cleaning National Provident Fund (CCNPF) for this sector as part of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, No. 75 of 1975 (RSA, 2000). All contract cleaning companies are obliged to participate in the Fund that provides retirement and other employee benefits, especially during the COVID-19 financial challenges (CCNPF, 2018).

The South African contract cleaning industry has played an essential role in job creation, contributing an estimated 0.8 % to GDP in the third quarter of 2019 (Research and Markets, 2020). The Research and Markets report listed 27 major South African companies as NCCA members. It includes large companies, such as Bidvest Services – owners of Bidvest Prestige; Supercare Services and Supercare Hygiene – owned by the Empact Group; and Servest. Other large companies comprise SweepSouth and Tsebo Solutions, operating in 23 African countries. Most cleaners in the commercial cleaning sector are employed on fixed-term contracts (Research & Markets, 2020). Without strenuous regulations, it became easy for new entrepreneurs to enter the cleaning industry, with start-up cleaning companies flooding the market (Bhorat, Cassim & Yu, 2016a). These cleaning companies attract many less-educated African women who need an income even though it is a low income, which keeps them stuck in working poverty (Feder, 2019).

The consequences are that new cleaning companies are partly responsible for the sector's significant growth over the past decade (Research & Markets, 2020). It became more affordable and convenient for organisations to outsource their non-core activities, such as cleaning, security, and catering services. The concern was raised that outsourcing companies often do not offer their contract workers the same benefits as permanent employees in the client organisation (Horwitz, 2019). Furthermore, total labour costs for the client organisation

could become lower due to contract companies competing and offering their services at discounted prices. Because organisations spend less on their non-core activities, they often display less commitment towards the same outsourced workers than when they were insourced (Bhorat, Steenkamp & Rooney, 2018; Horwitz, 2019).

While the biggest threat to the cleaning industry is insourcing, cleaning companies are also susceptible to economic downturns, such as those experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. The lockdown caused many clients to cut costs by negotiating lower rates due to employees working from home, and office blocks were left standing empty. As a result, more than 2.2 million workers were retrenched, of which many were low-paid African females (Devereux, 2021). The pandemic greatly impacted labour markets and industrial networks. The problem is that cities have built innovation complexes around physical density, digital technology, and real estate developments during the past decade. During the pandemic, several ecosystems that relied on face-to-face interaction, such as co-working spaces, hackathons, and venture capitalists' mentors, moved online (Zukin, 2021). In addition, the construction industry recession and cancellation of rentals further constrained many cleaning services companies (Research & Markets, 2020).

Green cleaning is a concept that refers to the use of chemicals – and not the human niche of Green. It can be derived that a Green human niche will have an interest in green cleaning. Interesting to note is that green cleaning has been driven by infection prevention and organisational control so that cleaners and occupants are not exposed to multiple chemicals affecting human health (Ramli *et al.*, 2019). The use of natural cleaning products and eco-friendly technology (new products, noise control, and enhanced cleaning practices) have forced cleaning companies to comply with specific cleaning product regulations (Harley *et al.*, 2021). The implementation of green cleaning typically involves strong facility administration leadership, environmentally friendly awareness work teams, and employees understanding, accepting, and taking ownership of green cleaning as a practice (Quan, Joseph & Jelen, 2011).

3.3.6.1 Contract cleaners

The outsourcing of cleaning services has posed a significant concern, and an uproar from labour unions about the security and sustainability of people's jobs as outsourcing comes at a price (Horwitz, 2019) (section 3.3.4). Although outsourcing may have made some services more effective and affordable to the client, it casts downward pressure on cleaning costs, negatively impacting the cleaners, their working conditions, and wages (Research & Markets, 2020). As previously indicated in the literature, cleaning companies typically appoint less-educated, low-skilled African female cleaners that form a large part of the poor segment of the South African population (Feder, 2019). These females are often not acknowledged in the workplace because cleaning is not a core function of the organisation, hospital, public spaces, and retail outlets (Ntsie, 2020). The result is that many cleaners feel alienated and insignificant because they are constantly reminded of their low status.

Therefore, Ntsie (2020) explored the perceptions and experiences of female cleaners in the South African Department of Public Works in Pretoria. The title of her thesis corresponds with the EHRC (2014) report (section 3.3.6), labelling contract cleaners as the *invisible workforce*. The research findings indicated that cleaning would continue to be an essential service. However, cleaning is often performed by an invisible workforce that stays invisible until something goes wrong and the invisible become the primary suspects (Hodgins, Fleming & Griffiths, 2016). Invisibility underwrites cleaners not being noticed, not greeted, and not

receiving recognition in the workplace. Therefore, they often go unrewarded for extra duties during unsocial hours, including late evenings, early mornings, and weekends, and are frequently not considered for training and upliftment (Hodgins *et al.*, 2016). In contrast, their vulnerability is compounded by job insecurity and a struggle to make ends meet (Ntsie, 2020).

3.3.6.2 Job category and risks

Cleaning is regarded as low employment needing no special skills and having inadequate training and knowledge of cleaning tools and vacuum cleaners (Ntsie, 2020). Cleaners are thus classified under the elementary occupations category in The South African Standard Classification of Occupations (SASCO) code list (StatsSA Census, 2001). This category defines cleaners as people who understand routine and straightforward tasks needing hand-held tools and, in some cases, physical effort (Ntsie, 2020). However, Ntsie discovered that two of the 16 research participants in her study held degrees, another had a certificate, and one had a diploma. These women applied for cleaning jobs because they could not find other work and needed the money (Ntsie, 2020). Quality employment is a critical issue for policymakers, governments, and researchers as it holds the key to social and economic advancement and providing a sense of self-identity (UNESCO, 2015).

Moreover, cleaning jobs are associated with health risks, such as administrative issues impacting the well-being of cleaners. These factors include no control over the pace of work and time, inability to take regular work breaks to prevent musculo-skeletal symptoms (Luger, Maher, Rieger & Steinhilber, 2019), and no opportunity of alternating between repetitive or monotonous chores (Hodgins *et al.*, 2016). Work intensity can be subjectively measured by self-reported indicators, such as tight deadlines, having to work at high speed, and indications that cleaners do not have enough time to finish the job. These work-related and demanding situations contribute to physical and psychological stress (EASHW, 2021; Hsieh & Chen, 2020). Physical discomfort caused by muscle tension decreases muscle repair and increases overall sensitivity, contributing to other physical disorders and strains (Hodgins *et al.*, 2016). Moreover, research indicated that an unpleasant working environment directly impacts employees' physical and psychological well-being (Hodgins *et al.*, 2016; Hsieh & Chen, 2020; Ntsie, 2020).

High job dissatisfaction amongst cleaners in the contract cleaning industry has led many employees to resign, strike, or demonstrate against working conditions (Horwitz, 2019; Lockett & Mzobe, 2016). Low hourly wages, long working hours, and disrespectful behaviour towards cleaners are some of the challenges they encounter in the workplace that led to job dissatisfaction (Ntsie, 2020). Segal (2017) conducted a qualitative study using semi-structured interviews with ten female and male cleaners to elicit their perceptions of job satisfaction in the cleaning sector. The findings indicated that the most crucial factors contributing to job dissatisfaction were hourly wages, health and safety, client relations, and too long or few working hours (Segal, 2017). The most important recommendations for job satisfaction included:

- i. Social workers in the cleaning sector need to create practical interventions in response to workers' job satisfaction and well-being needs. For instance, Bhorat *et al.* (2018) and Qasim, Cheema and Syed (2012) found that income plays a vital role in employees perceiving the company as accommodating their well-being, job satisfaction, and job commitment.
- ii. The cleaning industry should introduce awareness campaigns to educate the public about the cleaning sector and the physical requirements of a cleaning job (Segal, 2017).

Conclusions are that South African cleaning companies can play an essential role in uplifting the African female working poor by enhancing their social standing, health and well-being, vulnerability, job satisfaction, competencies, and salaries.

3.3.6.3 National Minimum Wage Act – Contract cleaners

On 07 February 2022, the Minister of Employment and Labour, in terms of Section 6(5) of the National Minimum Wage Act, No. 9 of 2018, announced the amended national minimum wages for contract cleaning employees as contained in Schedule 1 and the amended Schedule 2 of the National Minimum Wage Act. It was published under Government Notice No. 45882 to become compulsory on 01 March 2022. These salaries are updated on an annual basis.

Table 3.2 illustrates the minimum hourly wage rates based on the specific area the employer is performing business (see the amended Schedule of the Government Gazette, p.5). These rates are subjected to the collective agreement of the Bargaining Council for the Contract Cleaning Services Industry (BCCCI) in that area.

Table 3.2: Minimum hourly rates for contract cleaning employees

Area A	Area B	Area C
<p>Metropolitan Councils: City of Cape Town Greater East Rand Metro City of Johannesburg Tshwane Nelson Mandela</p> <p>Local Councils: Emfuleni, Merafong Mogale City Metsimaholo Randfontein Stellenbosch Westonaria</p>	<p>All areas in KwaZulu-Natal Conditions of employment and minimum wage rates for KwaZulu-Natal areas are subjected to the collective agreement of the Bargaining Council for the Contract Cleaning Services Industry (BCCCI).</p>	<p>All areas not listed in Areas A and B</p>
<p>Rate per hour: ZAR 25.52</p>	<p>Rate per hour: BCCCI rates apply</p>	<p>Rate per hour: ZAR 23.27</p>

Source: Government Gazette 45882 of 07 February 2022.

3.3.7 Approaches to employee protection and poverty reduction

According to Cilliers (2021), the South African government attempts to address the persistent levels of inequality through progressive fiscal redistribution, higher social spending, targeted government transfers, and affirmative action to diversify wealth ownership and promote entrepreneurship among the formerly marginalised (Cilliers, 2021). However, these measures

need to be supplemented by reforms that promote private investment, jobs, and inclusive growth (IMF, 2021). The performance of the South African labour market continues within a framework of labour market policies and governance that is supposed to oversee working conditions (Leibbrandt, Woolard, McEwen & Koep, 2010). Although various government programmes aim to relieve poverty and provide income, these attempts have not succeeded yet, such as the Expanded Public Works Programme (SA Government, 2021). Discussions in the following sections will focus on reducing working poverty to benefit African females in the cleaning services industry in South Africa.

3.3.7.1 *The Basic Conditions of Employment Act No. 75, 1997*

The Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA) is an act promulgated by the South African government in 1997 (RSA, 1997) to regulate and protect employees from exploitation by their employers and sets minimum regulations for employers to follow. Accordingly, the Minister of the Department of Employment and Labour published in Government Gazette 45882 of 07 February 2022 that the earnings threshold in the Basic Conditions of Employment Act No 1997 of all employees earning above ZAR 224 080.48 per annum will be excluded from Sections 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 15, 17(2) and 18(3) of the Act (BusinessTech, 2022). Earnings entail the regular annual remuneration before deductions, such as income tax, pension, medical, and similar payments. It also excludes equal payments (contributions) by the employer and employee, subsistence and transport allowances, achievement awards, and overtime-work payments that are not regarded as remuneration (RSA, 1997). The earning threshold is the dividing line between the Labour Relations Act and the Employment Equity Act, where certain conditions apply.

3.3.7.2 *National Poverty Lines*

The COVID-19 pandemic and unrest have disrupted South African life, reduced social and economic activities, and caused more people to live below the breadline (Jain *et al.*, 2020). The South African Reserve Bank played an essential role in maintaining the inflation rate below 3 % and decreasing the repo rate by 300 basis points to improve consumers' lending, spending, and saving power. However, it had little effect on those at the lowest income levels with limited access to credit and less likely to benefit from interest rate cuts. In response, Statistics South Africa (Stats SA, 2021) adjusted its lowest NPL indicator in September 2021 to ZAR 624 per person per month (section 1.2.1.1). These poverty lines are calculated and established by the Consumer Price Index (CPI). Furthermore, poverty lines are practical tools for statistical reports on poverty level patterns and planning, monitoring, and evaluating poverty reduction programmes and policies. The lower-bound poverty line, which includes the FPL plus the amount derived from non-food items, was set at ZAR 890 per person per month for spending at FPL levels, while the upper-bound poverty line was set at ZAR 1 335 per person per month. The reality is that the extreme FPL or breadline is higher than the amount allocated by the government for the child support grant of ZAR 460 per child per month as of the end of April 2021 (Stats SA, 2021).

Although the National Poverty Line (NPL) is not intended to determine minimum wages or the amount for social grant payments, it may help inform poverty measures (Stats SA, 2021). The concern is that even when people feel satisfied after a large portion of maize meal, it does not imply that they have eaten a balanced meal. The long-held consequences for society could be overweight and, for children, undernourishment that could cause stunted growth and brain

development that negatively impact physical health, cognitive development, and learning ability (Statista, 2021a; 2021b). Sherman, DeBot and Huang (2016) argued that direct income support could reduce poverty, reinforce children's ability to succeed in school, and enhance long-term mobility. For this reason, the following sections will explore the South African social grant system and tax revenue system contributing to social relief grants.

3.3.7.3 Social welfare grants

Social welfare grants are allowances paid by the South African government to South African citizens, permanent residents, or refugees with official status approved by the South African government and living in South Africa, all in a state of need of support and financial aid (Mackett, 2020; Western Cape Government, 2020). Social grants are defined as income for vulnerable groups from funds they did not contribute (Satumba *et al.*, 2017:33). Grants are tested for eligibility and allocated by the SA government to mitigate poverty levels among the poor and vulnerable. The central role of the social assistance grants in South Africa is to alleviate poverty, improve the standard of living and stimulate socio-economic development. (Satumba *et al.*, 2017).

The COVID-19 lockdown gave cause for a new SRD grant for persons over 18, which assists those in dire need of food and unable to meet the family's most basic needs (SA Government, 2021). Millions of South Africans receive poverty relief through social grants. Then again, most poor have inadequate education and low labour skills and are unlikely to participate in the current labour market. Unless drastic steps are taken to relieve and eradicate poverty, these people will continue surviving in poverty (Goldman *et al.*, 2021). Moreover, most grant beneficiaries are African women with children and workless family members as dependents. At the same time, less than 5 % of the retrenched and unemployed received Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) payments during the COVID-19 lockdown (Matthews, 2020).

Consequently, South African social grants have become one of the core sources of income for the poorest households and have to a degree, cushioned the poor from the impact of poverty (Devereux, 2021). Unfortunately, fraud still prevails, stealing from the poor through loopholes in the grants system (Satumba *et al.*, 2017). Some grants support the African working poor cleaners up to a degree but still cannot uplift them from poverty. Available grants for qualifying people are listed as follows (Western Cape Government, 2020, online):

- i. A *care dependency grant* is awarded to full-time caregivers of children with disabilities.
- ii. A *child support grant* is apportioned to the primary caregiver of children under 18 years and living in South Africa.
- iii. A *disability grant* is available to people with disabilities on either a permanent or temporary basis for six to twelve months. After this period, the person or caregiver must apply again.
- iv. A *foster child grant* is awarded to people taking care of a foster child and needing financial assistance.
- v. *Grants for older persons* (old-age pension) are available for pensioners over 60 years of age and eligible for the grant.
- vi. A *grant-in-aid* is an additional grant for people already receiving a disability, pension, or war veteran grant. These individuals will typically be diagnosed with mental and physical disabilities.

- vii. The *SRD grant* is paid to persons in great need of financial help (SA Government, 2021). The amount of ZAR 350 per month will be permanently available to South African applicants who live within the borders of South Africa, are above 18 years old and unemployed, and are not receiving any form of income, social grant, or UIF.
- viii. *War veteran grants* is available to those who fought in World War I or World War II and people over 75 years of age (Western Cape Government, 2020).

3.3.7.4 The South African Social Security Agency

The South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) is a public entity in terms of Schedule 3A of the Public Finance Management Act. SASSA was founded in 2005 to manage and distribute grants on behalf of the Department of Social Development. The main functions of the parastatal are to oversee the payment of social grants, disbursement of grants to eligible beneficiaries, and fraud prevention and detection (Department of Social Development, 2021). Since 2019, close to 19 million South Africans have depended on social grants, relief support, or government-funded social relief (Head, 2021; Statista, 2021b). The Finance Minister announced the latest SASSA grants in April 2021 (Chothia, 2021):

1. The old age and disability grants are ZAR 1 890 per month.
2. Grants for persons over 75 years and war veterans are ZAR 1 910 per month.
3. Foster care grants are ZAR 1 050 per month.
4. Care dependency grants are ZAR 1 890 per month.
5. The child support grant apportions ZAR 460 per child per month and reaches about 66 % of all children under 18 years old in South Africa (Devereux, 2021:18).

The figures above clearly show that individuals living in a household with an old-age pensioner have better poverty relief outcomes than those with child support grants (Statista, 2020). Households with old age pension recipients may be more conducive to the labour market than other households over time. The reason is that pensioners receive a better income than those with child support grants (Mackett, 2020). As a result, social grants have to an extent, reduced the intensity of poverty in high-poverty areas among the South African population, female-headed households, and poverty-stricken rural areas (Satumba *et al.*, 2017).

However, Chipfupa and Wale (2020) warned that though South African social grants serve as a vital source of unearned income, these grants can negatively influence people's motivation to work and earn their livelihoods. They cautioned that if not properly managed, social support can result in dependency syndrome or an attitude and belief that the poor cannot solve their problems without external help. As a solution, Devereux (2021) suggested that the poor should exchange labour for government support, which will not be an easy task to manage in South Africa. Furthermore, Chipfupa and Wale stressed the importance of recognising psychological capital (mindset), streamlining and improving the targeting of social grant support, and working towards uplifting women in all economic spheres. However, an ongoing challenge is the unintended impact of grants on the personal authority of beneficiaries (Chipfupa & Wale, 2020). An earlier study by Prakash, Jain and Chauhan (2015) indicated that the change in education patterns and the reinforcement of inherent personal authority plus long-term government support could facilitate the young generation to exploit beyond currently available jobs. The

authors suggested that learned skill-sets and infrastructure support could aid people in creating successful entrepreneurial establishments (Prakash *et al.*, 2015).

Recommendations are that mechanisms must be implemented to reduce unemployment and simultaneously increase the efficacy of social grants on poverty reduction among the poor and vulnerable (Chipfupa & Wale, 2020). The Expanded Public Works Programme should create quality employment opportunities while growing labour-absorbing small, medium and micro enterprises (SMME) (Devereux, 2021). For increased efficacy, social protection mechanisms should be monitored and carefully evaluated to ensure that targeted individuals and households produce significant results through the impact of the programmes (Chipfupa & Wale, 2020; Prakash *et al.*, 2015). However, a significant concern is that government funding needs to be recovered from taxpayers' contributions.

3.3.7.5 Taxpayers in South Africa

The discussion of taxpayer contributions draws mainly from a BusinessTech (2021b) report on data supplied by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), a global accounting firm, due to little other available information. The South African government relies heavily on income and direct taxes from personal and corporate income tax. A concern is that the most significant part is coming from a declining taxpayer base. From a population of around 60 million (Luis, 2020; WHO, 2021) and 22.2 million registered taxpayers in the 2019/20 tax year, about 1.6 million taxpayers contributed to South Africa's income tax fund (BusinessTech, 2021b). According to estimates, South Africa obtains 38 % (9.7 % of GDP) of its tax revenue from personal income tax, 15.6 % (4 % of GDP) from corporate income tax, and 27.1 % from VAT (Value-Added Tax) (6.9 % of GDP) in 2021. In its submission to parliament at the end of February 2021, PricewaterhouseCoopers revealed that of the 25 % of those who pay income tax, 80 % of the income tax was collected from personal income tax (BusinessTech, 2021b).

PwC further notified parliament that South Africa has an above-average, high-income tax burden relative to other countries and far above its GDP peers. According to PwC, high-income taxes produce lower consumption and savings that sequentially translate to lower economic growth (BusinessTech, 2021b). According to the BusinessTech report, high corporate income tax has a crippling effect on economic growth. The reason is that companies pay their taxes but spread the burden across three parties, namely the owners of capital, labour (through low wages), and consumers (through higher prices). In addition, high corporate income taxes create an incentive for companies to immigrate to countries with lower tax rates, thereby negatively affecting SARS's efficiency in administering corporate income tax and reducing revenue collection (Wier, 2020).

3.3.8 Efficacy of poverty reduction in South Africa

After 27 years [since 1994] of new governance, more than 50 % of the population is still living in poverty, with South Africa still being the world's most unequal country (Friedman, 2021). Ramnath (2015) studied the South African government's poverty reduction programmes in which he reviewed the i) Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), ii) Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR), iii) Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa (ASGISA), iv) National Development Plan (NDP), and the v) Social Assistance System of South Africa (SASSA) to highlight the limitations of the different strategies. His findings were that the different strategies did not resolve the leading cause of poverty, namely unemployment, but instead focused on the social welfare of the poor (Ramnath, 2015).

Therefore, Ramnath recommended that South Africa create a conducive environment for highly inclusive economic growth and eradication of poverty. Swaroop (2017) and Howes *et al.* (2017) also urged a sustainable economic growth rate by constructing guidelines and policies that include the following.

- i. Creating and safeguarding macro-economic stability.
- ii. Investing in human capital and physical infrastructure.
- iii. Creating an enabling environment for competition and trade.
- iv. Improving and strengthening the financial system.
- v. Adopting state-of-the-art technology and encouraging innovation.
- vi. Ensuring environmental sustainability.

However, although these recommendations are appropriate and upright, it will take considerable commitment and time for the policies and guidelines to develop and uplift the poor and ensure sustainable growth for South Africa (Swaroop, 2017). According to the World Bank's (2020b) poverty and shared prosperity report, policies and measures to assist inclusive growth should support the following.

- i. Early childhood development (pre-school).
- ii. Shared access to quality education.
- iii. Inclusive health care.
- iv. Enhancing infrastructure to connect poor regions.
- v. Access to finance (Swaroop, 2017).

However, if the disadvantaged are denied access to healthy food choices, quality education, and job opportunities, they will not be able to participate and benefit from accumulated growth (Swaroop, 2017). Research findings further indicated that once people escape working poverty by receiving a decent salary, psychologically, work-life balance becomes more important (Haar *et al.*, 2018). Thus, sustainable development and decent wages should include equality and inclusivity, work-life balance, and job satisfaction (Plagerson *et al.*, 2019). The point is what gives reason and enables some people or social systems to emerge from difficulties with positive outcomes while others do not.

3.3.9 Resilience and personal authority

What is it about some families that allows them to face adversity and challenges over the life cycle and survive and even thrive in the face of seemingly overwhelming odds? — Hamilton et al. (1996: xxv).

People often mention how poverty could weaken a family or single-parent household while other low-income parents display resilience and cope despite their daily adversities. They successfully supervise their children and have a solid and positive parent-child relationship while building close relations with family and friends (Wilson-Simmons, Jiang & Aratani, 2017). Resilience through the lens of poverty may be expressed differently, such as the ability to

survive hardship and continue despite downward spirals and difficult life conditions (Hurley, 2020; Theron, 2020). Furthermore, it refers to self-empowerment to accept and adjust to life conditions and push forward (Béné *et al.*, 2014:599). Consequences are that some people can overcome adverse conditions linked to poverty and still display social, emotional, and cognitive competencies while thriving and doing better than others in similar circumstances (Pettit, 2016; Wilson-Simmons *et al.*, 2017) (section 1.8.3 and section 3.2.3).

Chronic hardship and unfair opportunities rooted in many years of social, economic, and political marginalisation of people and groups form part of the South African structural detriment (Theron, 2020). For example, a third of women in South Africa are working in informal and low-wage employment linked to socio-economic vulnerability and food insecurity (Horwood *et al.*, 2021; Haar *et al.*, 2018). However, it was found that resilient people have better outcomes in similar difficult working conditions (high demand, low impact, low support, and increased likelihood of depression) than others in the same situation (Shatté, Perlman, Smith & Lynch, 2017:135-150).

Theron (2020:78-98), referring to Kumpfer (1999), listed five individual resilience skills. Motivational skills include hopefulness and future direction; cognitive competencies entail management skills; emotional stability comprises positive emotions, control, behavioural, and social skills. Furthermore, organising, life, and communication skills are essential together with physical well-being (Theron, 2020). Subsequent resilience-focused research indicated that hope is the most vital personality skill to predict adult resilience (Goodman, Disabato, Kashdan, & Machell, 2017). The importance of relations for personal resilience when facing difficulties is particularly pertinent in Africa. Traditional African ways value the interdependence of family, community and a relational network that cares for the needy (Theron, 2020; Ramphela, 2012). Family and communities enable access to essential resources, provide emotional encouragement, show patience, and teach resilience-enabling principles and culturally prominent values (Goodman *et al.*, 2017; Theron, 2020). Kašpárková, Vaculík, Procházka and Schaufeli (2018) established that resilience is positively related to job performance. However, Béné *et al.* (2014) argued that resilience-building and personal authority do not replace poverty reduction and economic growth. The recommendations were for government interventions to improve social protection, access to health services, and safe childcare support (preferably at the workplace) for working mothers (Haar *et al.*, 2018).

3.3.10 Intergenerational strategies and the social compact

In June 2019, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa called for a social compact with solid partnerships between the government, business, labour, communities, and civil society (GoLegal, 2019). Partnerships would focus on economic transformation and job creation, education, skills and health development, and consolidating social wages through reliable and quality services. They would further focus on geographic integration, human settlements and local government, social unity and safe communities, and a capable, ethical and developmental state for a better Africa (Losch & May 2020). Though, in May 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Ramaphosa called for a new social compact among role players to restructure the economy for inclusive growth during and after the pandemic (McCandless, 2020; McCandless & Miller, 2020).

Intergenerational strategies and the social compact were defined by Cornman, Kingston and Butts (1998:10) as:

Policies and programmes that transfer tangible resources and care across age groups, age cohorts, and generations within families. They are sources of mutual aid and building a more civil and caring society. They also embody actions based on the social compact. The social compact expresses and is based on the reciprocal ties that hold families, governance, and society together over time. When humanely conceived and honoured at each level, the compact has fostered and remains necessary for human development and progress. In turn, the exchange of knowledge and resources across generations with families and across age groups and cohorts within society is a bedrock on which a successful social compact rest.

Social cohesion is fostered when each segment of society works together for the greater social good (McCandless, 2020). Therefore, efforts to strengthen the social compact would not be necessary if there was less concern about the health of the compact. In South Africa, the family compact is strained or broken by divorce. Parents must work, and single parents, typically grandmothers, raise the children, the most significant part of the population segment. In contrast with earlier values, generations of families now live apart as single parents or urban immigrants that send their children 'home' to live with their grandmothers, while many children are born to unmarried mothers (Feder & Yu, 2020). Besides, there is a lack of participation in public elections, politicians have separate agendas, and politics are increasingly dominated by significant, misleading contributions, negative political campaigns, and fraud (Bhorat *et al.*, 2018). Other signs of the weakening social compact are the levels of violence displayed at home, alcohol abuse, declined involvement in civil and community projects, harsh public speechmaking appealing to people's emotions rather than reason, and a progressively impatient and angry population (McCandless & Miller, 2020).

In turn, a transformative business and government agenda is built on norms of solidarity and provides services that are distributed according to people's rights. Unity envisions state intervention as a channel for reversing structural inequalities and distributing income and opportunities evenly while contemplating complementary social and economic policies (Plageron *et al.*, 2019). According to Cilliers (2021) from the Institute for Security Studies, there are reasons why South Africa needs a new social compact. As one of the six upper-middle-income countries in Africa (World Bank, 2020b), South Africa is steadily falling behind in almost every dimension of human progress concerning average income levels, poverty rates, quality and quantity of educational outcomes, services delivery, and health indicators. Moreover, redistribution of wealth is not a viable alternative to growth for eradicating poverty because redistribution depends on growth (Plageron, 2019:1-9). "Without much faster economic growth, South Africa's response to inequality, poverty, and deprivation has probably reached the end of the road" (Cilliers, 2021).

Therefore, recommendations by (Cilliers, 2021:45) include:

- i. Revisiting the NDP to define and set the aim and then update the living plan to translate its implementation into practice.
- ii. Changing the debate and thinking from race to class to provide a more inclusive future across all sectors of society. The focus should be on supporting and assisting the disadvantaged, poor, and those without opportunity (not by handing out money but by providing social and economic opportunities).
- iii. Focusing on improving the quality of education.

- iv. Enhancing and securing the railways and policing through local government.
- v. Focusing on opportunity enablers, such as quality health care, education, and rudimentary infrastructure to ensure steady and sustained growth. The aim should be on 3 % and not on 5 % growth per year.
- vi. Simplifying procedures because regulatory and compliance burdens hamper progress. For example, releasing an additional high demand radio frequency spectrum for wireless networks has taken years. Nevertheless, it will allow mobile networks to offer cell phone users better services, faster speeds, and reduced prices (Vermeulen, 2021). In addition, the implosion of South African Airways (SAA) is being delayed, and obstacles to emergency electricity in the Short-Term Power Purchase Programme still prevail (Cilliers, 2021). As a result, no definitive decisions are taken to resolve the current problems obstructing South Africa's growth and progress.

Fundamental to all the above is the restoration of confidence of all South Africans in the future of our country and getting 'all hands-on deck.' A country that actively works to promote equity and opportunity for all its citizens – attracts its diaspora (and their cash) and opens its doors to pursue capital and skills from elsewhere – is a country open for business, trade and growth. We are the gateway to a region with immense opportunity. We need to seize that opportunity – Cilliers (2021).

3.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter critically interrogated theoretical concepts and constructs relating to the poor and working poor to address the African female low-wage dilemma in the contract cleaning industry in South Africa. Insights are that poverty affects all South Africans, not only those living in poverty. It impacts the broader society that enables it and those that work towards eradicating poverty. For most people, growth involves physical labour, which is often the only asset for African females to improve their well-being and upliftment from extreme poverty. Typically, most cleaners grew up in poor circumstances and segregated environments that resulted in inferior education and low skills, with the only job meeting their competencies being a cleaning job.

Another insight obtained from the literature review is that African females need education and training to improve their competencies for upliftment and emancipation. Health and school facilities require substantial upgrades and safety for girls to obtain a better education. Furthermore, contract cleaning companies and the government are obliged to create quality and better-paid jobs for self-improvement and the dignity of cleaners. Mechanisms that assume the African female poor to be incapable and chronic, pay them a low wage and disrespect, and prevent them from building upliftment competencies, are poverty enablers. Pity, postponement, deprivation, indignity, exclusion, and low wages keep people living in poverty. Such treatment leaves the poor dependent on other social structures for survival and ultimately breaks down their self-worth and self-respect until they believe they are incompetent. Economic policy proposals must address female inequalities by empowering them economically, socially, and politically to ensure their emergence within an equal and fair society and economy. Thus, social and financial transformation within a safe and supportive work environment is crucial for the working poor in the contract cleaning industry.

The inference is that the working poor can break the poverty cycle when gaining resilience and personal authority for self-improvement. Therefore, each cleaner should be offered better work

opportunities and salaries supported by a practical competency-building framework. The perception obtained from literature is that the African female contract cleaner can be uplifted through economic growth, social and business support, and personal development and training to improve competencies in the current and future work environment.

There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they're falling in — Desmond Tutu (speech, n.d.)

Chapter 4 will present the findings from the constructivist grounded theory as described in Chapter 2. Finally, the findings from this literature review will be triangulated with the findings from Chapter 4 for a broader scope on the phenomenon and rigour and trustworthiness of the thesis.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS

Freedom is not compared to the survival or the economic mobility of the African woman. They are free only when they have power over their own lives — Essof, 2009:51.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the research findings of the constructivist grounded theory, of which the methods and design were discussed in Chapter 2. Perceptions and stories were elicited from 22 African female contract cleaners through personal in-depth interviews regarding their early upbringing, education and causal circumstances, life and working conditions, financial situations, and ambitions for a better life. The findings in this chapter give voice to their vulnerability, dreams, and ambitions and an insight into the minds and being of the African female working poor in the South African contract cleaning industry. The women's embodiments of living and working in harsh, underprivileged, and often survival-like circumstances will be verbalised and theoretically coded to develop a new theory.

Furthermore, the verbiage from a focus group of five African women who progressed in their careers in the company will be presented and triangulated with the findings from the personal in-depth interviews. Finally, the statements and ideas from a focus group of six company managers or career advancers are presented regarding education and learning, low-wage cleaners' commitment, and personal, company, and government interventions and actions required to uplift cleaners. The primary findings will be triangulated with insights from the literature review (Chapter 3) at the end of this chapter. A new theory constructed through analytical coding and theorising will be presented in an analytical narrative in Chapter 5 to derive a competency-building framework for the contract services.

The research was based on the observed phenomenon stating that elevated levels of unemployment and the low level of education skills required for most cleaning jobs enable employers to recruit new employees effortlessly, thereby actively negating the need for skills development and impeding the ability of the working poor in this sector to break the poverty cycle. Consequently, the aim was to derive a competency-building framework for the upliftment of the African female working poor in the South African contract cleaning services. The research objectives that prompted the presentation of the research findings were to:

Investigate the actual life conditions of the African female working poor in the South African contract cleaning industry.

Explore the learning and career ambitions of the African female working poor in the South African contract cleaning industry.

Critically interrogate theoretical concepts and constructs relating to the poor and working poor in South Africa.

Data were collected and analysed concurrently (section 2.7.1) and constantly compared (section 2.7.2) with the support of memo writing to keep track of the theorising and coding. The first step involved initial or open coding (section 2.8.2). Next, the transcriptions were coded and compared by searching for themes and labelling similar incidents in the participants' early upbringing, education and training, causal circumstances, life and work conditions, financial situations, and career ambitions. Next, axial coding iteratively compared and sorted codes into sub-ordinate categories (section 2.8.3). Finally, the sub-ordinate categories and properties were further integrated into super-ordinate or overarching categories. Hence, data theorising comprised the last stage of analytical coding in which sub-ordinate categories were raised to super-ordinate categories to build a new theory for analytical narrative writing (section 2.8.4, section 2.8.5, and Chapter 5).

Furthermore, analytical memos were written that served as a record of thoughts, ideas, and questions that emerged during the research process from participants (section 2.7.3). Memos will be added throughout the presentation of the data to support significant facts and actions. The following memo describes the research site, the role of the researcher, and the focus and contribution of the research.

Memo: The company incorporates a large, long-standing, and reputable cleaning company in South Africa, of which the Sandton office served as the research site. The researcher is responsible for business transformation and optimisation in the company. Her role includes overseeing the internal transformation of the business in line with the requirements of the relevant legislation, internal transformation goals, and increased shareholder expectations. The company diligently adheres to all rules and regulations concerning fair labour practices and observes its people as the most valued resource. Furthermore, the employer pays the prescribed wages stipulated by the respective bargaining councils and consistently pays it on time to all employees. Training opportunities are available to all employees through the duly accredited in-house learning and development department and include several full qualification programmes in Cleaning and Hygiene. Although the company's contract cleaners earn more than the legislated minimum wage for South Africa, it is commonly accepted that contract cleaners earn a low wage. This low wage is also in line with the skill requirement, which generally implicates a relatively low skill.

The research explicitly excludes domestic cleaners or contract workers as a variable because these cleaners fall outside the services offered by the researcher's employer and research environment. Participants were purposely selected comprising only employed African female contract cleaners with access to formal personal development opportunities in the workplace. Even though also bound by the legislative minimum wage, domestic cleaning work partially lacks the formality provided by contract cleaning organisations and their bargaining councils. These circumstances have left domestic workers more exposed to potential unfair labour practices and less available to apply a formal competency-building framework towards their upliftment.

4.2 PRIMARY RESEARCH FINDINGS

Given the limited research on the African female working poor, in the South African operating in the contract cleaning industry, a constructivist grounded theory was applied. With the adaptation of this methodology, the researcher drew on the strengths of multiple qualitative methods for concurrent data collection and analysis. Data were constantly and abductively compared in the personal in-depth interviews, career progressors focus group discussion, and the focus group discussion with experts or career advancers to enrich the research scope and understanding of the life and work conditions of the African female working poor (Bryman, 2016). Questions were adapted and modified along the research to collect and analyse relevant data for new theory building.

4.2.1 Personal in-depth interviews

The personal in-depth interviews were preceded by explaining the aim and objectives and the obligations of the researcher and participants. Research questions were not always discussed in the same order due to the need not wanting to interrupt the participants' perceptions and stories. Some females became exceptionally emotional, while others were anxious to speak about their circumstances. Others needed encouragement to voice and share their opinions. She quickly detected that the participants' realities differed significantly from her reality and understanding of their life and work conditions. The situation needed someone to be part of their lives to comprehend their survival circumstances.

As an example of cleaners' different settings and experiences, the auto-ethnographic note below portrays the life of an African woman who had studied after school without reaching her goal of escaping the poverty cycle. Due to limited skills and little opportunity, Naledi (P9), now 53 years old, had worked at the same hospital under three different contract cleaning companies for more than 18 years and with the current company for the past three years.

I grew up in Limpopo. Then my father was what I understand, she [sic] was working with the pipes, so my mother at home, looking for us, [s]he is the one, the lady who teach us how to grow up. And he is the lady who teaches because you must be first clean before you can start to clean. First me, I must be clean. It is what I know. Before you wake up every morning, go and bathe, and be a nice kid, before you can go to the kitchen, he was so strict. Then when I grow up, my mother starts to teach me now; I think if you are a girl, she will come in while you are still sleeping; No, you must wake up earlier in the morning, and it is true. Every morning we woke up, I take the broom and go outside, sweep the ground, first, after that you come back and wipe the vensterbank [windowsill] outside before you go inside, wipe it nicely, wipe the windows, before you can go inside in the house. At home, we were only three girls. Some passed away.

I finished school, my matric, after that I came to Pretoria to take some courses at the Technikon. I made Economics, Typing and Business Economy [sic], and Accounting, but unfortunately, you know, at that time, if you are looking [for] the job, they are telling you about the experience, that is why today I ended here. My mother was selling vegetables. Meanwhile, my father came in at the end of the month, then she was trying to help me, both, and then my mother was paying for me all the things.

You know my dream...I just want to open my own company of the cleaning. In that dream, nê [right?], so that I can show maybe the other cleaners how to clean.

...no, I do not know about training by the company. Like maybe I can go and teach or do, to teach someone how to clean or how to do something like that...but if there is an opportunity, I can use it, I must come, it is my opportunity, and the last one, you will see in seven years [before turning 60]. I can come if I get the opportunity.

I have worked for three years for this company, but I have worked as a cleaner for 18 years. Before that, nothing. I was just at home looking for a job. The first time I got a job there at Medicross, and then that is it. Now, I have nothing that I do for extra money. I work eight hours. Monday to Friday, sometimes weekends. We rotate. So, for 18 years, I have been working at Medicross.

...Eish, just the salary, my job I like it, but only the salary is too small. For now, there is nothing I want [the company] to change. In life, nê, that I want to change, maybe I just want to extend maybe my house. That is, it, because I think it is too small for me and my granddaughter[s]... yeah, I only want to extend my house... if I can extend it, then it would be fine. But the money, it is a problem. I have an RDP house in Mamelodi. My husband is not working. It is only me working. He was security [guard] before he had a stroke.

For me, I have only got two kids, a girl and a boy, and then the girl is 34 years... has two children. I love my grandchildren. The first one is 15 years, and then the other one is 9 years. My daughter does nothing, no work. She did not get the opportunity for cleaning. First, she worked at the SAMCO, then they retrenched from there. I try maybe to look for a job, but unfortunately, nothing with the COVID. She does [sic] not have a husband. She stays with me you know, because of the kids. So, the father of the kids, not taking care anymore, it is only me who takes care of my granddaughters.

I look after my husband myself. There are six with me in my two bedrooms. My son, he is a "special" boy. He is not normal. Yes, but when I look at him, [s]he like to work with the hands, everything, and [s]he cannot pronounce nicely. [S]he is at school now, at the Tshogofatsong Special School; yeah, it is where they train.

We receive SASSA grants for my granddaughters (2), and even the last one because he is a 'special', he gets some [disability grant]. And my husband for disability. Because he got a stroke, he gets the SASSA. I use a taxi... "Yo!", and I spend so much to get to work. I spend ZAR 80 per day [approximately ZAR 1 760 per month] because it is a double transport. My salary is ZAR 3 000 after the deduction. And then I use the money for transport. And food. We must pay the municipality [water and electricity]. And my account to buy food and transport for Dhumelo [son with a disability] to school, but sometimes I just take her money because they got their SASSA, buy groceries, electricity.

[People] they are struggling, maybe I can tell myself I am not struggling because I have got a job, it is what I can say, some of them, they are not working, they are struggling... I like to share if maybe my neighbour does [sic] not have any food, or maybe the kids are crying, I can go ask what happened? "No, nothing, we do not have nothing" [food], I just take, and then we have to share because we are people and you look the way we live there... And even if I go to the street, they just call me "Ouma", "Ouma, give me sweets, ZAR 1" you know, you see, because they just need ZAR 1 because they do not have anything at home.

If my employer maybe can help me, if I can go maybe to get like a learnership maybe to do something, that it can help me tomorrow if I am old. Maybe the government, if I am the pensioner, to come and... if I have got the crèche, to come and help me with food, maybe to get the nice shelter for the kids.

Memo: On her emotions after the interview – *I was so scared. Hey, I am old enough. Why the interview today because I am too old? And they say: Just go, you will hear what they are saying, and I pray...okay, God will help me.*

As Naledi's (P9) story and quotations from other participants' stories indicate, language posed an issue during the personal in-depth interviews. However, they could voice their feelings openly and honestly. In addition, the semi-structured interview guide supported the eliciting of comparative data from all participants (see Appendix F). Although natural storytellers, some participants had to be prompted with additional questions to fill the gaps and keep the information flowing for the hour-long interviews. The themes used for collecting and comparing relative data from the participants are explained below.

i. Life when growing up.

It was important to know where the participants grew up, whom they lived with, what their parent's education and jobs were, how many people lived in the household, and what opportunities they had to study or complete their qualifications. This information was used as background to develop an independent analysis to write the analytical narrative.

ii. Education and learning during and after school.

Participants were asked where they attended school, what grade they finished, and whether they studied after school. The unrelenting question was that if they could choose any job, what that would be (ambition and aspirations). The question was followed by asking them what would make it possible to reach their ideal job. Subsequently, they had to indicate whether they knew about the company's training programmes, had attended any training, and wanted to attend training to improve their competencies and qualifications. Finally, their answers were compared to whether they thought Cleaning and Hygiene is a professional career.

iii. Life at work

The participants had to explain what kind of cleaning job they performed, how long they had been working for the company, and what jobs they had done before joining the company. They also had to clarify whether cleaning was their only job and how many hours per month they worked for the company. Prompts further included what they liked and disliked about their job and work conditions and what they would like to change in their work environments if they could.

iv. Life outside work

This question covered information about their children's fathers and their partners, whether these men worked, what jobs they were doing, and where the cleaners lived. Also, how many children they had and with whom the children lived, if not with the research participants. Finally, they talked about their dreams, expectations and ideas to enhance their lives.

v. Financial situation

The participants were asked about their income and with whom they shared it. In addition, they discussed their expenses, additional income, and whether their family members received government grants. Another critical point of discussion was whether they perceived themselves as able to take personal authority for their emancipation, self-empowerment, displaying resilience, and building competencies for upliftment.

vi. Intervening strategies and actions

The last question was included at a later stage to discover what they thought the company and government could do towards uplifting the working poor. This question linked to the previous discussion point as the belief was that the working poor need to take ownership of their upliftment before business and government interventions would succeed.

Consequently, the interviews delved deep into the participants' lives and work conditions, experiences and dreams, self-improvement, and readiness to accept personal authority. It required an understanding of their character and what identity markers or circumstantial patterns influenced the course of their lives (Charmaz 2006). Participants were personally involved in articulating their lives and work in the cleaning environment, which seemed necessary for comparing and maximising data from the different sources. Moreover, the research sample was comparatively homogenous, which aided new theory building (Corbin & Holt, 2011). Throughout the analysis, the researcher remained reflexive and sensitive to new concepts and codes and did not force data into categories.

Furthermore, her caring skills assisted her to extract rich data through field notes and capturing the participants' body language and emotions that supplemented and enriched the content (Cunningham & Carmichael, 2017). Subsequent interviews focused on creating new codes and categories and recognising patterns in the data until reaching a point of theoretical saturation. The following sections will discuss the analytical and iterative coding, which developed into a web-like theory depending on several theoretical possibilities emerging from the construct.

An Otter software package (section 1.7.6) was applied to transcribe the recordings, and data were manually coded. Codes were constructed early in the analysis through theoretical sensitivity and reflexivity, the researcher's experience as a manager, and the constant comparative method. Initial or open codes were provisional, comparative and grounded in the data elicited from participants. Moreover, open coding was meant to discover new theoretical possibilities while engaging with the qualitative data. The purpose of breaking up the data into discreet parts and labelling these fragments was to compare similar incidents in the data. Furthermore, coding forced her out of her preconceived beliefs and biases.

Memo: The transcriptions were initially coded line-by-line (section 2.9.2.1) through in-vivo coding, deriving codes from the data and emphasising the participants' actual spoken words. It required repeatedly reading through verbatim transcriptions to make sense of the spoken language while coding the data. However, the longer data were collected and compared, the more arbitrary open coding became. The reason was that several participants' perceptions and stories followed the same pattern (Appendix F). Hence, the more the same ideas took hold, the more the coding changed to comparing incidents to previous incidents (section 2.9.2.2). Fragments were compared with fragments to create codes that connect them. Open coding naturally flowed into axial coding in which subsequent category properties were identified to build sub-ordinate and later super-ordinate or overarching categories.

Axial coding required a more focused way of coding. The codes were clustered around axes, including participants' early upbringing and education, causal circumstances, life and work, consequences, ambitions, and intervening strategies and actions (Charmaz, 2006). The researcher asked herself what life conditions caused child poverty and working poverty that prevented contract cleaners from breaking the poverty cycle. What had been their education

and learning and the causal conditions for their career circumstances? What could contribute to fulfilling their dreams and aspirations, and what interventions were there for upliftment? The most significant and frequently constructed codes were theorised, and comparisons were drawn between ideas to make analytical sense of a large amount of data (Charmaz, 2009). These patterns and interrelationships created substantive theoretical categories for new theory building.

Memo: A dense texture of relationships between the codes started to build around axes of categories, turning them into core categories of which the action was identified as axial coding. The focused or axial coding strategy was to sort, synthesise, and organise the open codes containing a large amount of data and reassemble them into sub-ordinate and super-ordinate or overarching categories. Theorising the data continued until a new theory developed from the overarching categories. Similar theoretical logic was applied to all transcriptions and field notes.

The following sections present the coding that progressively created new theoretical possibilities.

4.2.1.1 *Life when growing up*

Verbatims from the personal in-depth interviews are presented below to reflect on the first research question statement: *Tell me more about your life when you grew up*. Although there were many contributions, only the most frequent open codes are quoted. Codes were identified by constantly comparing incidents with incidents. For more detail on the interview notes, see Appendix E.

- Masarosa, P4:** *I was there with my mother, my uncles, and the wife of my uncle and their children, and my siblings. I can say 15 about. My mother worked in a butchery cleaning.*
- Mariah, P5:** *My father was a carrying boy. We struggled a lot. We were very poor when I grew up.*
- Linda, P8:** *We stayed with my grandmother... My mother was a domestic worker in Johannesburg... "Yo" [sic], my grandmother was a hard worker. That is how we survived.*
- Irene, P12:** *Mom and dad were separated when I was still young. ...total of ten people in the house – over weekends, eleven with my mother who came during weekends to visit. Hey, we were struggling too much, but she was trying, she [domestic worker] was trying so hard.*
- Lesedi, P14:** *My mom and dad separated... I stayed in Alex with my mom... My mom was a domestic. She struggled to stay with me around. I had to sleep with my family outside her workplace. She could not take care of me that much. My*

aunt worked in a factory and maintained us with a little bit of food. We used to eat pap and cabbage almost every day.

Mpho, P16: *When my mom [15 years old] fell pregnant, my parents were teenagers, and my dad was 16 years old. My dad brought us to his parents.*

Lerato, P17: *I fell pregnant after matric, and then I had a baby... my parents were disappointed... let me rather [get] something to do so that me and my kid, we can survive.*

Makhanane, P18: *I got my child at age 18.*

Thandiwe, P21: *I am the fifth of seven. Mom did not work, and dad was a security guard [in Hillbrow] ... My firstborn, I conceived her when I was 15, I got raped, so she was a result of rape, and then with my second child, I got raped, 18. ...I was so young.*

Rose, P20: *I fell pregnant at 16 and started working at 21.*

Makhoti, P1: *My father was absent.*

Small, P3: *My father was not part of our lives.*

Lala, P6: *My father passed away when I was 6. We were very poor.*

Linda, P8: *I did not know my father.*

Queen, P10:

Patience, P19:

During the axial coding phase, open codes were modified and grouped around the axes of sub-ordinate categories. Hence, common incidents formed a pattern among codes indicating a central phenomenon or the “what” explored (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Table 4.1 displays the sub-ordinate categories developed from the open codes.

Table 4.1: Life when growing up

<p>Sub-category: Childhood poverty</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Struggling • Poverty and survival • Poor nutrition • Inadequate education • Limited qualifications 	<p>Sub-category: Women household poverty</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large families • Absence of fathers • Poverty and survival • Inadequate education • Mothers not working • Limited skills • No work opportunities • Cleaning work
<p>Sub-category: Absence of fathers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separation and divorce • Not part of their lives • Death • Not knowing the father • Poverty and survival • No child maintenance 	<p>Sub-category: Childbirths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early childbirths • No work opportunities • Poverty and survival

Four sub-ordinate categories were developed from the open coding. These categories represent a combination of experiences and emotions during sharing perceptions and stories about the participant’s childhood years. The most frequently emerging themes were childhood poverty, woman household poverty, absence of fathers, and early childhood. Throughout the theorising process, poverty and survival, struggling, suffering, unhappiness, divorce, separation, and a tough life emphasised the circumstances. Although constructivist grounded theory typically does not include counting, affirming the number of participants who had experienced similar circumstances added to the category properties.

i. Childhood poverty

Seven (31.8 %) of the 22 participants indicated that they had grown up with a mother and father at some stage of their childhood. Their mothers and grandmothers had little or no education and typically were homemakers, domestic workers, or cleaners. Similarly, the fathers received little or no education and performed low-paid jobs, counting mineworkers, farmworkers, gardeners, builders, petrol attendants, and security guards, while some had no jobs. The personal in-depth interviews indicated that 96 % of parents had little or no formal education to earn a decent salary. The females’ stories revealed a life of struggle and growing

up in poverty. The parents and grandparents battled to survive. They were reared in the same poverty cycle. Their children would follow the same route unless intervention happened by taking personal authority together with business and government interaction.

ii. Woman household poverty

Fourteen (63.4 %) of the 22 participants grew up with their mothers, mothers and grandmothers, or grandmothers only. They lived predominantly in rural or segregated areas with households counting to 17 members, including siblings, uncles, aunts and cousins. Those mothers who were full-time domestic workers or cleaners in the cities hardly ever saw their children. As young girls, they survived with their mothers, grandmothers, or other families on pension grants, child grants, and clothes, vegetables, snacks and food sales, or no proper income. Most females experienced their lives in these woman-headed households as hard, physically and emotionally. They remembered the rejection from their fathers and sometimes their mothers, abuse, unhappiness, and generally, little nutritious food.

iii. Absence of fathers

Of the seven (31.8 %) participants who did grow up with fathers, three of them indicated that their fathers were absent during their developing years due to working far from home. Additionally, fourteen females (63.6 %) who lived in woman-headed households did not know their fathers. Their fathers had disappeared, their parents were separated or divorced, or their fathers had died early in their childhood. The fathers who had left did not contribute to their children's education or expenses due to having another family, being too old, workless, deceased or showing no interest in their children.

iv. Early childbirths

Early childbirths comprised the participants delivered by teenagers and left with their grandparents to take care of them with their siblings, cousins, uncles, and aunts, all living in poverty. Their parents were not there to educate and inform them when they grew up. The participants then had early pregnancies, and the children were again left with their grandmothers or great grandmothers. Results were that seventeen (77.27 %) of the participants had early childbirths, which negatively influenced their education and caused them to continue the cycle of poverty and survival, no jobs, or working in undesirable conditions. The few participants who lived with their children indicated that they struggled to survive and had to share their salaries with workless family members.

Memo: As researcher I did not mention “working poverty”, “poverty cycle”, or “survival” during the personal in-depth interviews. Instead, these themes developed by theorising the data into codes and sub-ordinate categories (section 2.8.3). In some instances, the open codes were modified and adjusted to combine them into sub-ordinate codes.

4.2.1.2 Education and learning

This section reverberates the essence of information on the second question statement, *Tell me more about your education and learning during and after school*. The verbatims with most frequently emerging codes portray causal circumstances for not continuing their education, attaining skills, and building personal authority to advance their careers. These facts are

important as the participants were selected for the research due to their low wages and little skill. For more detail on the interview notes, see Appendix F.

- Masenyoro, P2:** *I have done Grade 12. After school, I did not do anything because I did not have money to go to school.*
- Masarosa, P4:
Mariah, P5:** *I completed Grade 12 but had no opportunity or money for education.*
- Linda, P8:** *I did matric in 1996. ...and studied the secretarial diploma in 1998. My mother paid... I did not become a secretary ...lost confidence in searching for a job due to no experience.*
- Mpho, P16:** *Acquired Grade 12 and the UKAATL1 and AATL2 ... worked as an accountant and debtor's financial clerk but could not continue ...almost blind and need corneal transplants for both eyes. ...under emotional stress and need counselling before another corneal transplant.*
- Lala, P6:
Loveday, P7:
Sibongile, P11:
DJ, P13:
Lerato, P17:** *I completed Grade 11.*
- Small, P3:** *I looked after my mother and was thinking too much and maybe I can move my mother, and she was the only person I had in life. I did not pass Grade 12 because I was stressed too much. As a result, I did not reach my dreams.*
- Irene, P12:
Queen, P10:** *I completed Grade 10.*
- Rose, P20:** *I completed Grade 8 because it was hard at home with a stepmother that treated us badly. It is difficult without Grade 12 because I cannot become a manager.*

Memo: On prompting the participants about *their ideal job*:

Makhoti, P1: *I can do office administration or personal assistant.*
Loveday, P7:

Linda, P8: *Would like to become a police officer.*
Lerato, P17:
Patience, P19:

Queen, P10: *Being a receptionist would be the ideal job for me.*
DJ, P13:
Makhanane, P18:

Masarosa, P4: *In my dreams, I see myself going further with my studies,*
Small, P3: *becoming a nurse.*
Mariah, P5:

Memo: On questioning the participants about their awareness of *company training* and *ambition to build skills*, the most frequent responses are quoted below.

Linda, P8: *The supervisors do not tell us if there is training at work because they think the cleaners are happy in what they are doing.*

Busi, P15: *[At head office] they offered internships, and I qualified for those internships, but I did not know because I was sent on site.*

Mpho, P16: *I have worked at the Care Centre for five years but do not*
Lerato, P17: *know about the company's training.*

Memo: On exploring whether the participants perceived *Cleaning and Hygiene as a professional career*, the most frequent answers are quoted below.

Masenyoro, P2: *I'm **not proud** to be a cleaner. I did not plan my life as being a cleaner. I have been a cleaner because I did not have any choice.*

Mariah, P5: *... it was hurting, more especially if you meet a friend from school and then they will tell you that 'I am a nurse, I am a whatever', and then you are a cleaner, it was sad, it hurt me.*

Lerato, P17: *It is not easy to tell somebody that I am a cleaner, I tell them I am working, and then I just give them [the company name] where I am working.*

Patience, P19: *... but cleaning [businesses] take everybody, whether you are educated or not, they take you*

Table 4.2: Education and learning

<p>Sub-category: Education and learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty and survival • Inadequate education • Limited skills • Limited thinking and planning • Emotional stress (family) • Inadequate qualifications • No work opportunity • Vulnerability 	<p>Sub-category: Ambitions (ideal job)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited thinking and planning • Poverty • Limited skills • Limited qualifications • Need for education and learning • Need for upliftment
<p>Sub-category: Company training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little awareness • Need for information • Need for communication • Need for upliftment • Cleaning a “comfort zone” 	<p>Sub-category: Cleaning as a profession</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No dignity • No pride • Vulnerability • No self-esteem • Not professional

Four sub-ordinate categories emerged from the open coding. These categories contained the most frequently emerging codes and their causal circumstances clustering around the axes. The categories represent a combination of the participants' perceptions and emotional reflections on their education and learning during and after school, ambition (ideal jobs), company training, and Cleaning and Hygiene as a professional career.

i. Education and learning

Eight participants (36.4 %) completed their Grade 12 in schools in Limpopo, two (9.1 %) in KwaZulu-Natal, one (4.5 %) in the Free State, and one (4.5 %) in Northwest. Six females (27.3 %) completed Grade 11, three (13.5 %) Grade 10, while one (4.5 %) completed only Grade 8 due to difficult home conditions.

Other causal conditions were limited planning, limited knowledge, poverty, little opportunity, and emotional stress, causing them not to finish school or apply for further education.

A few participants followed courses in firefighting, paramedics, computer typing, and security. However, two (9.1 %) security guard positions were abandoned quickly because of low wages.

Three (13.6 %) participants studied further:

- one (4.5 %) in Human Resources Management,
- one (4.5 %) in Hospitality and Training, L4, and
- one (4.5 %) in Electrical Engineering, L6.

However, they struggled to find internships in their training field and took on cleaning jobs.

ii. Ambitions (ideal jobs)

Police officers, nurses, office administrators, and receptionists topped the list as the ideal jobs. It became evident that only four (18.8 %) of the 22 participants wanted to further their jobs in the cleaning business. The others indicated that they applied for a cleaning job because that was the only job available. However, these participants were unsatisfied with their wages while showing little awareness of training opportunities in the company towards competency building and upliftment. Although twenty participants (90.1 %) had dreams and aspirations for a better job and future, their thinking and career planning seemed limited. All participants expressed their need for further education, learning, and financial support to reach their goals.

iii. Company training

Of the participants, 60 % had worked in the cleaning services for more than three and up to 18 years, including contract cleaning companies other than the research site. However, the indication was that most of these low-wage employees did not know about vacancies, training, and internships. It became clear that cleaners needed communication, information, and clarification from management about what positions are available and how they could apply and attain their goals. Although all participants confirmed the need and desire for training, a few answers indicated no interest or readiness for further training. For example, two cleaners (9.1 %) did not see the need for training because "*cleaning, ... it is easy, simple.*" Although 95 % of the participants complained about the working hours and low salaries, they also viewed a cleaning job as a comfort zone where they did not have to exert themselves intellectually.

Memo: Although participants indicated that they would attend training if their supervisors allowed them, the body language of six cleaners (27.3 %) clearly showed that they were not interested or required additional motivation to further their training. A recommendation was that the company should determine what relevant qualifications cleaners have and what training they would need to grow their competencies. Typically, the perception is that cleaners do not have qualifications while a growing number of cleaners did complete their further education.

iv. Cleaning as a profession

Only four participants (18.2 %) perceived cleaning and hygiene as a professional career they would like to pursue. Other cleaners indicated that they were ashamed to let their friends and community know they were cleaners. Cleaning is typically viewed as a means of income only and a simple job not requiring a certificate or further education. They stated that the community and friends did not view cleaning as a dignified job and showed little respect. The result is that cleaners are not proud of being a cleaner and would rather hide behind not telling the truth.

Memo: A recommendation from *Busi (P15)*, was that supervisors and trainers ought to motivate and inspire cleaners to undergo training to build their competencies long before they start their training. According to her, cleaners should first uplift their thinking because they need different competencies to turn cleaning into a professional job.

4.2.1.3 Life at work

This section presents the participant's perceptions of the third question statement, "*Tell me more about your life at work*". The verbatims and most frequently selected open codes were documented. Furthermore, they were prompted about what they liked or disliked about their jobs and work circumstances and possible changes in their work environment. It was noticed that the themes were closely linked to the participants' perceptions of themselves and cleaning and hygiene as a professional career. For more detail, see Appendix F.

- Masenyoro, P2:** *By the time when Covid started, it was bad. At that time, I was finishing my job.*
- Loveday, P7:** *Before Covid, I worked with an office in Sandton. Then, unfortunately, the contract was terminated.*
- Thandiwe, P21:** *I started working because I had responsibilities. I had people to take care of, especially my kids. I then started temping as a cleaner, and I needed to pay bills.*

Memo: On asking what they did not like about their jobs.

Makhoti, P1: *When I am busy cleaning, people will go through there even though you will put a wet sign, don't go there, it is wet, and then they will tell you, you are a cleaner, it is your job.*

Irene, P12: *I do not see my pen. You just say: "Irene stole my pen", yeah, that I do not like.*

Lesedi, P14: *They take us like we are just cleaners. ... just because they are paying us, we are nothing, yeah, we are just cleaners to make their place look nice for their clients, that is it.*

DJ, P13: *They cannot greet you.*

Table 4.3: Life at work

<p>Sub-category: Work-life</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID-19 • Job losses • Terminated contracts • Temporary jobs • Vulnerability • Family responsibilities • Emotional stress • Need for upliftment 	<p>Sub-category: Job dislikes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disrespect • Invisibility • Accusations • Hurtful feelings • Low wages
<p>Sub-category: Job opportunities (likes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income • Steppingstone 	

Three sub-ordinate categories were constructed from the most frequently appearing open codes on causal circumstances for the cleaners' work-life, job dislikes, and job opportunities (likes). The following sub-ordinate categories reflect the participant's perceptions and emotions about their work conditions.

i. Work-life

Work-life posed various difficulties for the African female participants, especially during the COVID-19 epidemic when this study was performed. Four females (18.2%) lost their jobs due to their cleaning contracts being terminated. Luckily, two (9.1 %) could be appointed in other positions, though not always what they preferred and two (9.1 %) were appointed as cleaners in the company. However, those in temporary jobs experienced greater insecurity and difficulty surviving than the cleaners in full-time jobs. In addition, growing responsibilities and taking care of extended families caused extra emotional stress.

ii. Job dislikes

Participants complained about receiving little respect from the public while performing their cleaning jobs. For example, people ignore the signage they put up while cleaning and do not flush the toilets they just cleaned. In addition, employees do not greet or thank cleaners in the office. Hence, they are treated as invisible until a pen, cell phone, or object goes missing. Then they are accused of taking it. The consequences are that cleaners lose dignity and self-respect.

iii. Job opportunities (likes)

Participants showed appreciation for their jobs as cleaning provided an income to survive and care for their extended families. The only other choice was to stay home without a job or income. Eight (36.4 %) participants viewed contract cleaning as a steppingstone towards finding a better job to increase their finances, dignity and self-respect. In contrast, two (9.1 %) young cleaners were grateful for their cleaning jobs while waiting for internships in their study field. Cleaning has provided a financial though low-wage outcome from hardship, especially for the older workers with inadequate education and limited skills.

4.2.1.4 Life outside work

These findings reflect on the fourth question statement, "*Tell me more about your life outside work*". Once more, verbatim responses, including the most frequently emerging open codes, are presented below. The researcher elicited information from the participants about their husbands and partners, whether they worked, what jobs they were performing, and where the participants lived. Also, how many children they had and with whom they lived, if not with the participants. The participants then talked about their ambitions, dreams, hopes and ideas to enhance their life conditions. For more detail, see Appendix F.

- Masarosa, P4:** *The father of my child does not contribute to his upbringing.*
- Lerato, P17:** *My husband is a foreigner. We try both sides to get money for survival, a tyre shop. We must pay [bribe] the police to keep the shop open.*
- Mpho, P16:**
- Loveday, P7:** *I do not know if it is a boyfriend or the husband because we are not married yet ...you can cry. He is just a boyfriend.*
- Makhoti, P1:** *I do not live with my boyfriend. My son is eight years old. My son's father left in 2016, and the child does not see his father.*
- Small, P3:** *My two children live with my mother in Venda. No, I have nothing. I do not have a boyfriend or a husband.*
- Mariah, P5:** *My boyfriend and I live in a garage in Freedom Park. I have a 17-year-old son that lives with my mother.*
- Lerato, P17:** *I am renting a backroom in a yard in Elsburg with my husband and two children.*
- Small, P3:** *I live in a shack in Thembisa with six other people.*

Verbatims with open codes serve as an example of the data gathered from the 22 participants on their life conditions. Four sub-categories were developed: males in their lives, children, life conditions, and ambitions (Table 4.4).

Table 4.4: Life outside work

<p>Sub-category: Males in their lives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence • No child maintenance • Piece jobs and jobless • Boyfriends • Financial support 	<p>Sub-category: Children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fatherless • Working mothers • Living with grandmothers • No role models • Vulnerability
<p>Sub-category: Life conditions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty and survival • Family support • Support structures • Accommodation • Family responsibilities • Vulnerability 	<p>Sub-category: Ambitions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better future • Own home • Permanent job • Need for education and learning • Better income • Funding • Limited skills • Need for upliftment

i. Males in their lives

Theoretical coding construed that no single or divorced female could rely on males for emotional and financial support or childcare maintenance. Although twenty-one participants (95.4 %) had one to four children, the fathers had left, were unavailable, or were jobless. Only two husbands contributed efficiently to the upkeep of the households, while another two, although receiving sustainable salaries, were absent in their family responsibilities. Five females (22.7 %) had boyfriends that were not their children’s fathers. The husbands and boyfriends included a cleaner, lab assistant, gardener, police officer, builder, courier, driver, supervisor, tailor, carpenter, and Uber driver, and three were doing piece jobs or jobless. The rest of the females did not have a man in their life.

ii. Children

Of the participants' children, 67 % grew up without fathers and with their mothers performing cleaning jobs. Furthermore, the cleaners still had to travel long distances to work and back home. A concerning fact is that the participants' children from early pregnancies were also left with their grandmothers and aunts in rural areas, living on pension grants and child grants. Children from two (9.1 %) households lived independently and did not do well in school. These children are reared in similar conditions as when the mothers grew up. Due to the participants' life and work conditions, they were not readily available to help the kids with their schoolwork or did not have the skill to help them. Two (9.1 %) participants lived with their mothers and children, and three (13.6 %) lived with their husbands and younger children, one (4.5 %) with her husband, two kids, plus two grandchildren, and one (4.5 %) with her son and his two children from different women. The participants and their families depended on their inadequate salaries, child grants and pension grants in the cases where the grandmothers assisted them.

Memo: With very few male and female role models available to the participants when they grew up, and again for their children, they were asked, "How do you make up for a good male role model for your children?" "What do you tell your sons and daughters?" Two participants explained their management of the issue as follows:

Lesedi, P14:

I think, at first, I thought that it was difficult, but now sitting down with kids and learning from televisions, radios and reading the newspaper and stuff, you get to learn how to treat your children, you get to learn how to make them, like, to groom [grow] them up.

Lerato, P17:

I sit down with them and talk to them about life and how I am living so that they must focus strictly on their schoolwork for them to be successful in life.

iii. Life conditions

Four (18.2 %) participants lived in subsidised housing with their husbands and children in complicated circumstances. The government-subsidised houses were far from work, the husbands were absent or abusive, or the tiny two-bedroom house with seven people was overcrowded. The rest of the participants lived with their husbands, boyfriends, or children in shacks, a back room, or a garage. They needed to spend their money surviving, taking care of extended families, and frequently financially supporting the men. As the children grew up, these females experienced uncertainty and stress with added responsibilities. Three (13.6 %) participants with typical Beige characteristics (section 3.2.1.3) had no support structures, while the rest depended on close family, friends, and a daughter for emotional support.

iv. Ambitions

Although three participants (13.6 %) did not see a bigger picture due to their present life circumstances, the others (86.4 %) dreamed about and aspired towards a better life, their own home, a permanent and more lucrative job, and better education. They believed that only education, training, and improved skills could give them a better job and life. Two young

participants (9.1 %) who had studied but still needed to complete internships in their study field displayed ambition and resilience to improve their life and work conditions and reach their goals. The following verbatims with coded data were sorted under Ambition as the sub-ordinate category.

- Masenyoro, P2:** *I do not want my kids to follow my steps.*
- Patience, P19:** *Whatever I do, I do for my daughter! I do not want to see my daughter the way I grew up. Everything I do is for my daughter.*
- Lerato, P17:** *I like to be able to buy a house for my kids, to have a home for them where I can take care of them and my parents also.*
- Linda, P8:** *I raise my kids that they do not grow up as I did, go to school and be educated.*
- Makhoti, P1:** *I want to go back to school... I want to learn.*
- Lala, P6**
- Irene, P12:**
- Makhanane, P18:**

Memo: Data from the personal in-depth interviews confirmed that the kids were reared in life conditions following a similar pattern to when the participants grew up – especially those children who were left with families or were living on their own in rural areas. However, three participants had grown in reaching their goals, acquired education, struggled to complete their internships, and showed resilience in planning their careers and enhancing their life conditions.

4.2.1.5 Financial circumstances

This section reflects on the fifth question statement, *Tell me more about your financial situation.* As the data were concurrently collected and analysed from a homogeneous group of 22 African female cleaners, the most frequently selected codes were shaped around the axes of four sub-ordinate categories: salaries, expenses, and SASSA grants. For detail on the interview notes, see Appendix F.

Table 4.5: Financial circumstances

<p>Sub-category: Salaries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low salaries • Limited qualifications • Limited skills • No for information • No career planning • No performance appraisal • Additional income • Transport expenses 	<p>Sub-category: Expenses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended families • Transport expenses
<p>Sub-category: SASSA grants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social support • Child grants • Pension grants 	

i. Salaries

The participants were selected purposely from the lowest pay scales (the bottom was ZAR 3 500 per month). About 50 % were stuck due to little education and training, unawareness of company training to build their competencies, and no career planning and performance appraisals. A few participants were asked what they perceived a good salary would be. Small (P3) gave a figure of ZAR 4 000 per month while Masarosa (P4) thought ZAR 4 800 would do. Masenyoro (P2) raised the amount to ZAR 6 500, and Lerato (P17) estimated that *“for a cleaning job for now, maybe it could be ZAR 5 000 or ZAR 6 000 a month, to help because cleaning... it is a job without qualifications.”* Lala (P6) considered ZAR 7 000 a good wage and, according to Loveday (P7), she would be *rich* on a salary of ZAR 15 000 per month. Loveday (P7) earned ZAR 700 per month as a temporary cleaner and her boyfriend ZAR 2 000 to ZAR 2 500.

Most participants indicated that cleaning was their only job due to limited time for an additional job. Two participants (9.1 %) sold “Avroy Shlain” [cosmetics] and Tupperware, and another baked cakes [vetkoek], which she sold at the bus stop. One of the oldest and less educated females helped her sister bake cakes and pastries for church events. A female (4.5 %) with entrepreneurial skills worked hard to earn an additional income for her two kids. She started a business in Limpopo, where her daughter sold dishwashing liquids and foam baths to further her studies. Unfortunately, her son did not want to study or take up work. Another participant (4.5 %) sold packets of peanuts, Niknaks, and sweets to increase her salary and supplement her taxi fare.

ii. Expenses

Apart from their accommodation, food, school fees, and clothing, caring for their extended families placed the participants under substantial financial and emotional stress. Makhoti (P1), took care of ten people on her ZAR 3 700 per month. The participants' largest expense by far was their transport. Two cleaners (9.1 %) were paying up to ZAR 1 750 and ZAR 2 000 per month as they needed to take two taxis to work and two back home after work.

iii. SASSA grants

Around 33 children in the participants' households, including their non-working relatives living with them, received child grants. The other children were past the age of 18 years, and some already had children for whom they received child grants. Several children lived with their grandmothers, one with a grandfather, and all received SASSA pension grants. Two (9.1 %) participants and their children lived with their mothers, who received pension grants, in subsidised houses. Three (13.6 %) of the cleaners' mothers had not yet reached 60-years of age.

Memo: These women's lives and financial conditions confirmed their working poverty and being stuck in a poverty cycle from which they could not escape. Cleaners and their families increasingly depend on government support and social grants to survive. Observations depicted hopelessness, despair, concern about the future, and a desire for education and a better, more lucrative job. Therefore, it was important to understand how these women believed the company and government could help their upliftment.

4.2.1.6 Actions and interventions

A sixth question was added to the interview guide to address working poverty, education and learning, intervention and redress, and competency building for the upliftment of the African female contract cleaner. Hence, the personal in-depth interviews were concluded with the question, *What can the company and government do to enhance your life and work conditions?* Three (13.6 %) participants had no idea how the company and government could help improve their life and work conditions. The remainder of the participants (81.8 %) focused on themselves and alleviating their poverty, what the company could do to change their circumstances, and actions needed from the government for uplifting contract cleaners. Verbatims with relevant open codes are presented below and summarised in Table 4.6. For more detail, see Appendix F.

Memo: Owing to the importance of theorising data for deriving a competency-building framework, more verbatims with open codes are listed. The codes served as properties to compile the sub-ordinate categories in Table 4.6.

Thandiwe, P21:

They must do job rotation. I do not want to do the same thing every day. They must come to the site and see how we are treated. They must look at people's skills and promote them into open positions. ...people who have been there for a very long time are still standing in one position, not going forward or backwards... people [need] to get encouraged to strive for more and open space for other people to come in. They must grow in terms of being them and in their intelligence.

- Busi, P15:** *The area managers must do more liaison with the clients. There are many problems at the sites that can cause the contracts to be terminated.*
- Busi, P15:** *There is nothing that is happening on-site. There is no information from the head office to the cleaners... there is a website... they must go to their phones, train them how to do it. Training Department must do more research on qualifications of cleaners to see what training they need.*
- Busi, P15:**
Makhanane, P18: *There is not enough equipment at the sites. It is not good for the company's image.*
- Busi, P15:** *Make the cleaners feel they belong and give them full access to the head office. They must be exposed to what the company is about while offering more skills to them.*
- Patience, P19:** *If the people do their best, do something for them, at least the award, let us say maybe every month I select someone, put at least ZAR 250 or sometimes, let us say it is December, buy us something, meat to do a braai, just to be together, to know each other.*
- Makhanane, P18:**
Patience, P19: *The company can uplift cleaners to give them a learnership, show them how to write. Some cleaners do not know how to complete a form.*
- Patience, P19:** *Show them to be leaders, they do not know how to be leaders.*
- Rose, P20:** *Cleaners must be willing to learn. Cleaners are willing to study while they work. They need their salary, but they need the training to improve themselves.*
- Eva (HR):** *Most temps have a month-to-month contract. If a contract opens, we usually appoint temps. Being a temp means no provident fund, no benefits, no bonus.*
- Masenyoro, P2:** *I think the government should open more job opportunities, at least when there are more job opportunities you can go and work there. ...provide free transport to schools as well as in our village.*
- Rose, P20:** *Help cleaners' children to attend school, assist them with bursaries and better opportunities for cleaners' children.*

Table 4.6 depicts three sub-ordinate categories with clusters of open codes around their axes. These categories include personal authority, company responsibilities, and government actions.

Table 4.6: Actions and interventions

<p>Sub-category: Personal authority</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-esteem • Resilience • Steppingstone • Dreams • Willingness • Readiness 	<p>Sub-category: Company responsibilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job rotation • Site visits • Skills promotion (learnerships) • Encouragement • Growing people • Client liaison • Information and communication (training, learnerships, vacancies) • Skills training (writing, leadership, access to website, IT training life skills, basic skills) • Providing cleaning equipment • Offering awards, appreciation, events • Temporary contracts
<p>Sub-category: Government actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job opportunities • Internships • Free education and training • Subsidised transport (school kids, villages, work) 	

i. Personal authority

Four (18.2 %) participants showed signs of personal authority and resilience by taking steps toward self-upliftment and helping other cleaners along the way. These participants worked longer hours or pushed their education and learning while working under current circumstances. In this case, they viewed contract cleaning as a steppingstone toward acquiring competencies for a better life and reaching their dreams. Some perceptions were that cleaners must be willing and committed to take personal responsibility for their upliftment and emancipation and acquire the relevant skills to pave their career path.

ii. Company responsibilities

Three (13.6 %) younger participants requested job rotation in their work due to becoming bored with doing the same cleaning in the same place every day. Cleaners called for management to visit the sites regularly to realise the cleaners' circumstances. A common complaint was no adequate equipment and cleaning materials at the sites. Client liaisons were requested to understand their complaints and secure renewal contracts with the company and the cleaners. Furthermore, some cleaners had worked in the same job and level for many years without any promotion. Therefore, learnerships and skills promotion should consistently be made available to all cleaners.

Moreover, the request was that all cleaners readily receive communication and information about learnerships, training, and vacancies at all sites via site managers, supervisors, billboards, the company website, and emails. Cleaners should receive basic training in using their cell phones to access communication tools and applications. Skills training for upliftment must include, among other things, basic skills (writing and filling in forms), life skills, leadership skills, administrative skills, and IT end-user training. Some cleaners needed encouragement to go for learnerships. Participants also voiced a need for management to appreciate good work via job promotions, financial awards, and events. Considerable concern was voiced against the company's notion of signing temporary contracts with cleaners when new client contracts are authorised. These temps receive no benefits, bonuses, or provident funds and are remunerated according to the few hours worked.

iii. Government actions

The most common requests were better job opportunities for the poor and less skilled, internships, and free education and training for the participant's children. Participants further voiced their need for free school transport, notably in the villages where the schools are far from home. Moreover, they called for subsidised transport for themselves to work and back.

After theorising and constructing sub-ordinate categories from the data in the personal in-depth interviews, additional data were collected and analysed from a focus group discussion with career path progressors in the company. Data from the focus group discussions in the following section will be triangulated with the findings from the personal in-depth interviews to identify similarities and differences in the properties of the sub-ordinate categories that would either add or deduct from their position to be raised to super-ordinate categories.

4.2.2 Focus Group 1 discussion

Focus Group 1 comprised five career-path progressors (a supervisor, area manager, receptionist, trainer, and office administrator) (section 2.6.2.1). The participants were purposely selected because of their progress and promotion to better positions and salaries gained through education and learning, leadership skills, and competency building in the company. In addition, their participation in the focus group discussion provided a better understanding of their previous experiences as low-wage contract cleaners and causal conditions for progressing along their career paths to better positions.

The interview guide was moderated to fill information gaps and clarify concepts on those described as working poor and breaking the poverty cycle. Discussions included previous work conditions, self-esteem, and how they perceived being treated while performing cleaning duties (Appendix E). Their contributions would be triangulated with the findings from the personal in-depth interviews to either confirm or reject theories. They were also prompted to

recommend practical solutions on issues around cleaning, training, competency building, and company and government interventions for the upliftment of the working poor. The focus group participants were eager to share their stories, which required respectful control of the discussion to cover all questions within an hour. Their sharing and openness enriched the earlier research findings and contributed to constructing sub-ordinate categories during the theorising process.

4.2.2.1 *Life as working poor cleaners (see also section 4.2.1.3)*

Focus Group 1 confirmed that cleaners are invisible as most office employees would not bother to greet them or call them by their names on their uniform tags (Table 4.1). However, as soon as something goes wrong, the cleaner would be the first to be suspected. In congruence with the findings in section 4.2.1.3, such treatment caused them to lose their confidence, dignity and hurt their feelings.

On questioning the focus group whether the industry and community perceive cleaners as the working poor, mutual insights are summarised in a quote from one (20 %) career path progressor. The following statement was mentioned by a member of Focus Group 1:

I used to be living on loan sharks. I needed to pay my rent and transport. And I must eat with a lot of things I need to pay. Being a single parent really added a lot of stress [three kids]. I don't know if I can mention, ZAR 3 500 is some people's grocery money, but we are expected to do everything with it. So, once you take out ZAR 1 000 for transport, you are left with ZAR 2 500 for food, really left with ZAR 1 000. And now you must pay rent. So, for me, it was just waking up and going to work.

Furthermore, Focus Group 1 agreed with the interviewees that the working poor do not consider Cleaning and Hygiene a professional career especially when working at such a low level of salary, and receiving so little respect. The career progressors stressed the importance of first changing cleaners' minds about cleaning being a professional career in which they could upgrade their skills. Only then, cleaners would be ready to see themselves as professionals who apply education and training in the cleaning business to advance their work and personal lives.

4.2.2.2 *Conditions and actions for change (see also section 4.2.1.6 and Table 4.7)*

Focus Group 1 was questioned about what caused a change in their thinking and what inspired them to change their current life and work conditions. Verbatims containing the most frequently appearing open codes contributed to constructing the sub-ordinate categories in Table 4.7.

You will be a cleaner forever unless there's someone next to you, pushing and encouraging you to do something better. You know, I must change the situation right now. So, I think also inspiration is something that has its value at the same time. You can do it.

I did all the training that I could over time. The managers push you to grow, supervisor, then manager and then area manager. I wanted to learn a lot when they were doing administration; I said, "Can I see?"

I got frustrated every day. So, I started looking at life from another perspective... That's when I sat down. I am going to go to school... and I will study, and I went back. I started dreaming. I am still not where I want to be.

Memo: At this point, the participants' eagerness made them lose control, and they had to be brought back to the discussion by asking what steps they took to effect change in their lives.

Applying [for training], and with the people I've worked with, they also helped me apply. ...spending a lot of time as a cleaner, they get so comfortable with their roles because they think "I don't deserve something better. I am a cleaner. I can't read. I can't write. You can get trained to do other things, ask where you don't understand.

I wanted to learn, and everyone I was lucky enough for them be able to see me and say, you are pushing yourself. So, I just wanted to know everything, even here in the office.

When I came here, I started making friends with people who could help me [networking]. I would ask them what do you think about this course? Those are the people that are coaching me, motivating me...the first step is you got to motivate yourself ...and hard work.

Memo: Time restrictions made it necessary to focus the discussion on what the responsibilities of the business were in uplifting the cleaners.

If something comes up, [cleaners] are supposed to be the first person to know. Some of the vacancy posts come up from the emails, which they [cleaners] don't have access to. We [company] are supposed to give them access to it. "There's a position available why do you not apply?"

And communication, communication, communication ... anything.

I realise that our cleaners do not want to read. We [company] post the vacancies every month. They need training.

Memo: The focus group discussion was concluded by asking the participants a final question, “Are you saying that not all cleaners will break the poverty cycle?”

When you start asking them [cleaners], they will tell us. They say computer and other courses. But they cannot find [another job]. You can first give them a learnership coming up. [They would say] “Yes, yes, they are interested but, two months down the line, they [disappear]. Nobody sees them.”

You will push them; you will even give examples of yourself. But then they go and hide. So, I must go look for them. How do you run away from change? The business is changing your life. So, some of them are being ignored then.

Table 4.7: Conditions and actions for change

<p>Sub-category: Causal conditions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Realising need • Motivation • Frustration • Self-belief • Encouragement • Willingness • Readiness • Ambition 	<p>Sub-category: Personal strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-confidence • Applying for training • No comfort zones • Search for information • Resilience • Networking • Working hard • Assertiveness • Showing interest • Communicating • Resilience (toughness) • Tenacity • Availability
<p>Sub-category: Company responsibilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicating vacancies, learnerships, and training • Providing IT end-user training • Providing skills training (communication, budgeting, admin) • Providing access • Realise unwillingness and vulnerability 	<p>Sub-category: Government actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising wages through bargaining councils • Education and training • Job opportunities • Entrepreneurship

Table 4.7 depicts the four sub-ordinate categories developed from the data theorising: causal conditions, personal strategies, company responsibilities, and government actions.

i. Causal conditions

The focus group discussion concluded that a cleaner gets to a crisis point where she experiences desperation and frustration before her need and motivation to better her circumstances are triggered. What changed for the progressors is that they were ready to grab any opportunity to further their education. They applied for vacancies, training, and learnerships to build their competencies and enhance their life and work conditions. The participants also received encouragement from their management, who pushed them to believe in themselves and accept personal responsibility for their empowerment. However, the focus group participants stressed that cleaners must be ready and willing to follow a path of learning, training, and learnerships to enhance their professional careers.

ii. Personal strategies (see also section 4.2.1.6 and Table 4.6)

The participants of Focus Group 1 took personal authority, boosted their self-confidence and took charge of changing their circumstances. They applied for training, which meant never falling back into a comfortable position and continually pushing forward. They networked with the right people and constantly asked for information and assistance to reach their goals. Their path to a better position required working hard, showing resilience in escaping the poverty cycle, and staying assertive in moving forward. Additionally, working towards a goal implied searching, communicating, and showing interest in learnerships, training and more lucrative jobs when vacancies became available. Accordingly, on her way to fulfilling her dreams, a cleaner should be available to perform any additional job, including administration, solving problems, and filing if required.

iii. Company responsibilities (see also section 4.2.1.6 and Table 4.6)

Findings from the focus group discussion contributed to the properties of company responsibilities, raising it to a sub-ordinate category. The participants confirmed and affirmed that the company should communicate all vacancies, learnerships, and training to all cleaners and their supervisors at each site. However, a participant from the focus group confirmed what a personal in-depth interviewee said, namely that cleaners do not read. Furthermore, many do not and do not know how to access company emails and information. Therefore, the company should provide internet access and training.

Skills training should include communication, budgeting, and administration. The focus group acknowledged that not all cleaners would be ready and able to learn. Therefore, managers should realise their vulnerability and accommodate these cleaners. There will always be a need for cleaners. In addition, opportunities for learnerships through Services SETA should be offered to all cleaners.

iv. Government actions

A recommendation from Focus Group 1 was that the government should raise the minimum wages of the working poor through the cleaning industry bargaining councils. The government should also support and fund education and training and provide internships, job opportunities, and entrepreneurship.

The data from Focus Group 1 were triangulated with the findings from the personal in-depth interviews. Since the career progressors had advanced from similar working poverty

conditions, they confirmed and strengthened the personal in-depth interview findings and added to the properties of the sub-ordinate categories raising them to super-ordinate categories.

4.2.3 Focus Group 2 discussion

The Focus Group 2 discussion was performed via video conference and documented during South Africa's strictest COVID-19 lockdown period (June 2021). The discussion included six senior company managers, counting the industrial relations manager with a seat on the bargaining council, the head of health care centres and contracts, the head of excellence, the head of operations, and two area managers. In addition, a trained scribe was incorporated to ensure a correct and comparable account of the focus group discussion. The modified questions were emailed to the experts beforehand. However, the questions were not discussed in the same order due to some experts voicing their meanings longer and more frequently than others. Nevertheless, rich data were collected throughout the discussion.

The experts or career advancers were requested to focus on low-wage worker conditions, prerequisites for career advancement, and what interventions and actions the cleaners, businesses, and the government could bring about to improve cleaners' competencies and, thus, their life conditions. The objective of the discussion was to collect data and triangulate it with the findings from the personal in-depth interviews and the Focus Group 1 discussion. Reciprocal sub-ordinate categories would be selected to substantiate and raise them to super-ordinate categories. The primary findings will partially contribute to deriving a competency-building framework as a proposal to the company. The Focus Group 2 discussions will be presented only as text.

4.2.3.1 Education and learning

Focus Group 2 participants were asked to indicate what education and learning cleaners require to advance their careers. The participants opined that thirty years ago [in the 1990s], the cleaning industry could only employ people that were otherwise unemployable because of not being able to attract talent. However, circumstances have changed in the past fifteen years [since the mid-2000s], and so did the calibre of people who apply for jobs at registered cleaning services. Nowadays, employees need a Grade 12 certificate to apply for a job in the contract cleaning business. A growing number of people holding certificates and degrees were becoming cleaners due to the lack of employment in South Africa. The consequences are that cleaning businesses are starting to develop and advance their own employees in the business. Accordingly, the competition to attract talent has increased amongst established cleaning companies.

Insights from the discussion are that education and learning with a minimum of Grade 12 prove to become the requirement for finding a job in the cleaning industry at the near lowest wage range. Cleaners can apply for skills training, learnerships, and vacancies to advance their careers depending on their work ethic and readiness. Moreover, they would be able to build their competencies for upliftment and gain better-paid jobs as the company grows its talent.

4.2.3.2 Conditions for cleaner advancement (see also Table 4.6 and Table 4.7)

The company experts agreed that those cleaners with positive attitudes should be identified for training and upliftment, including those desperate but ambitious and resilient workers using

contract cleaning as a steppingstone toward better work opportunities. Furthermore, workers should show responsibility and an interest in advancing the cleaning business while being conscientious in performing their jobs. They should display positive thinking in dealing with issues on site, display leadership qualities, and act helpful and supportive. Cleaners should have a voice, speak up, and express their willingness to learn and perform new duties. The career advancers were adamant that workers should take pride in their jobs and show ambition to learn, progress, and better themselves. However, they were clear in their apprehension that some cleaners would make it and some would not.

4.2.3.3 The role of education and learning for people upliftment (see also Table 4.2)

The experts' responses manifested that cleaners should be willing to do more than required before being promoted to team leaders and supervisors when vacancies arise. They also conceded that people with potential and a good record are generally acknowledged for career advancement. However, the challenge lies with those who can handle people well but fail to perform administrative tasks. Thus, those cleaners who want to progress in their careers should commit to learning and avail themselves when offered training. The point was raised that the working poor should first realise their need for training and competency building as steps towards improving their work and financial circumstances.

4.2.3.4 The role of networking and relations for advancement (see also Table 4.7)

According to the experts, cleaners do have and should have an open channel to the company's training department on which they could call for information and help. However, not all cleaners have the confidence or feel free to speak to their area managers or supervisors. The result is that shop stewards often gain better positions due to their excellent communication, networking, and leadership skills.

4.2.3.5 The role of the business in employee advancement (see also Tables 4.6 and 4.7)

The experts concurred that all employees should be permitted and regularly informed about learnerships and training and competency building opportunities. Training should be announced on different platforms for every worker to access. Furthermore, a talent structure should be available to indicate advancement requirements and managers and regional managers should be allowed to identify employees for upliftment. A list containing the names of cleaners committed to building their competencies should be available. Furthermore, training should be conducted over a period not to affect the work noticeably.

A prerequisite for the company was that training must be in place to accommodate those cleaners with ambition. Furthermore, training results should be acknowledged in a newsletter for everyone in the company to note, like current Learnership Programmes but not as formal. Management awards could deliver cleaners the professional authority that they need. Moreover, everyone should have a personal career development plan, job description, and an annual career planning meeting with management. These mechanisms would help people gain self-esteem and personal authority. However, the experts were clear that no cleaner should feel compelled to attend training. The experience and reality were that not all cleaners would opt for training.

4.2.3.6 The role of the cleaner in breaking the poverty cycle (see also Tables 4.2, 4.3, 4.4 and 4.6)

The experts identified a gap in the cleaning industry for youth between the ages of eighteen and thirty years old who battle the most due to viewing a cleaning job beneath their status. It might be because cleaners perceive themselves as inferior to others and would often side with somebody that they view poorer than themselves. Thus, it has become vital for the public and cleaners to perceive cleaning as a career and not part of the poverty problem. Cleaners need to be given the voice of more and always wanting more. For Focus Group 2, it implied not acting meekly and mildly but showing ambition and resilience to follow a personal development plan for advancement. Emancipation and upliftment should be an intrinsic desire born into each person to progress in life and build their capacity. An important point raised during the Focus Group 2 discussion was that the South African Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) should be applied to regulate all companies in the contract cleaning industry. Through its bargaining companies, the cleaning industry has exceeded the national minimum wage by about 12 % to 15 %.

4.2.3.7 The role of government in advancing the working poor (Tables 4.6 and 4.7)

Services SETA requires a Grade 12 certificate for their learnerships. Hence, the focus group agreed that there should be potential for recognition of prior learning (LPR) for cleaners without Grade 12 to attend these learnerships. In addition, the government should assist the working poor financially and subsidise low-paid cleaners' wages as they are listed at the bottom of the government's minimum skill and salary scale.

4.3 TRIANGULATING THE GROUNDED THEORY FINDINGS

An independent theoretical analysis was performed on data from 22 personal in-depth interviews, a focus group discussion with five career progressors, and a discussion group containing six career advancers or experts from the company. The findings contributed to exploring a poverty life cycle starting the upbringing, education and learning, life and work conditions, financial circumstances, causal conditions, aspirations for change, and actions and interventions for the upliftment of low-wage African females in the contract cleaning industry in South Africa. Substantial theoretical coding throughout the constructivist grounded theory emphasised education and learning and competency building as the most frequently appearing themes that dovetailed throughout the sub-ordinate categories constructed from the codes.

Typically, African females' inadequate education and consequent limited qualifications and skills caused by poor living conditions and deprived nutrition in their early upbringing reduce their work opportunities, aspirations and planning towards upliftment and emancipation. The absence of adult male figures in their households, together with early childbirths, aggravates the female household poverty with the result that the female working poor rely on child grants and pension grants to survive. The only job these African females could find for survival was a contract cleaning job. However, the community and cleaners do not perceive Cleaning and Hygiene as a professional and dignified job. A lack of access to information for upliftment, humiliation and public disrespect, lowers the cleaner's self-esteem. Instead, education with a Grade 12 certificate has become a requirement for entry, advancement, and upliftment in registered contract cleaning organisations. These category properties have highlighted Education and Learning as a super-ordinate category (Tables 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, and 4.7).

Poverty, survival, and vulnerability play a pivotal role in inadequate education and limited skills in the event of applying for low-wage, undignified jobs. The value systems or human niches in which they were born, victimisation, and low self-esteem prevent them from upliftment. Adverse financial circumstances and inequality cause chronic poverty and dependence on social grants. As a result, poverty cripples competency building and the upliftment of cleaners in their jobs unless there are actions and interventions for change (Tables 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5). Cleaners need emancipation from chronic poverty through communication and access to information. Poverty as causality and the product of inequality dovetailed throughout theorising on education and learning, life and work conditions, and the upliftment of the working poor and, therefore, was raised to a super-ordinate category.

The sub-ordinate categories, Actions and interventions (Table 4.6) and Conditions and actions for change (Table 4.7), were combined into one super-ordinate category, namely Actions and interventions for upliftment. The reason is that both categories embraced the causes and results of poverty, insecure life and work conditions and insufficient education and learning. However, the category properties changed from adverse needs and requirements to positive actions, strategies and interventions for competency building, advancement, and the upliftment of the African female contract cleaners. Conditions for upliftment are that cleaners take up personal authority and resilience and use cleaning as a steppingstone towards their advancement. In addition, they must seek information and communicate their needs for training and competency building.

Furthermore, they should apply for training and show their availability and willingness. The business and government should actively strategise for training and learnerships to uplift and emancipate the African female working poor. Upliftment starts with changing cleaners' thinking about their job and building competency for job advancement and upliftment. Training and learnerships must be communicated and access to information provided. The government needs to take action to provide quality education and training. Job opportunities, internships, and entrepreneurship are vital for growth, and the minimum wages of the working poor should be raised.

4.4 TRIANGULATING THE PRIMARY RESEARCH AND LITERATURE REVIEW FINDINGS

Instead of analysing the data through coding only, super-ordinate categories from the primary data were used (section 4.3) to triangulate references to theoretical constructs in the Literature Review in Chapter 3. Triangulation of the primary and secondary research enriched the findings and development of the grounded theory. Moreover, data were constantly compared to accrue more evidence for building a new theory and analytical narrative.

The tables below present the triangulated data by condensing the data of the major components while rotating between the findings. Therefore, the super-ordinate categories developed from the primary research in section 4.3 I serves as statements in Table 4.8 to refer to related constructs from the literature. The super-ordinate categories contain education and learning, poverty as causality and product of inequality, and actions and interventions for upliftment. In addition, some sub-ordinate categories and their properties from section 4.3 were collapsed, combined, and modified to dovetail the super-ordinate categories into a new theory.

4.4.1 Education and learning

A list of the references consulted to triangulate the primary and literature review findings regarding education is contained in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8: Triangulating the primary and literature review findings – Education

Primary Research Findings	Literature Review References
Poverty and survival – South Africa	Anciano, 2021; Goldman <i>et al.</i> , 2021; ILO, 2020; Gammarano, 2019; Zizzamia <i>et al.</i> , 2019; Beck <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Lilenstein <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Sulla & Zikhali, 2018; Sheehy-Skeffington & Rea, 2017
Nutrition and deprivation	Brewer, 2020; le Roux <i>et al.</i> , 2020; Fouché <i>et al.</i> , 2020; UNICEF, 2020; Modjadji & Madiba, 2019; Samuel <i>et al.</i> , 2018
Absence of male figures	Vidojević & Chipkin, 2021; Dawson & Fouksman, 2020; Jain <i>et al.</i> , 2020; Moore & Seekings, 2019; Ferguson & Li, 2018
Early childbirths	Atake & Ali, 2019; Beegle & Christiaensen, 2019; World Bank, 2019
Inadequate education and learning	Reddy & Mncwango, 2021; Goldman <i>et al.</i> , 2021; Bhorat & Khan, 2018
Limited qualifications and skills	Craig, 2021; ILO, 2021; Goldman <i>et al.</i> , 2021; Ntsie, 2020; Theron, 2020; Dawson and Fouksman, 2020; Magnuson & Duncan, 2019; Kaine <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Sofa & Wicks, 2017
Limited aspirations and ambition	Matthews, 2020; Patel, 2019; Beck <i>et al.</i> , 2018

Primary Research Findings	Literature Review References
Reduced work opportunities	Boschman <i>et al.</i> , 2021; Jain <i>et al.</i> , 2020; Ntsie; 2020; Modjadji & Madiba, 2019
Contract cleaning	du Toit & Heinecken, 2021; Schnabel, 2021; Research & Markets, 2020; Ntsie, 2020; Banker <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Kaine <i>et al.</i> , 2018
Perceptions of cleaning as a profession	Schnabel, 2021; Feder, 2019; Filandri & Struffolino, 2018; Lilenstein <i>et al.</i> , 2018
Humiliation and disrespect	Ntsie, 2020; Horwitz, 2019; Lockett & Mzobe, 2016; Viljoen, 2015
Lack of information for upliftment	Sanei, 2020; Beck <i>et al.</i> , 2018
Needing training, competency building, and upliftment	Fouché <i>et al.</i> , 2020; Beck <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Viljoen, 2018; Viljoen, 2017; Viljoen & Laubscher, 2015

During the data triangulation, some constructs in the primary findings needed to be collapsed and combined to relate the data to literature constructs without removing the meaning. New references were also added to the literature review in Chapter 3 as part of the iterative data theorising.

4.4.2 Poverty as causality and product of inequality

A list of the references consulted to find supporting evidence in literature for the emerging codes from is contained in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9: Triangulating the primary and literature review findings – Poverty

Primary Research Findings	Literature Review References
Women’s poverty, survival and vulnerability	de Groot & Lemanski, 2021; Horwood <i>et al.</i> , 2021; Feder, 2019; Gradin, 2019; Rao & Min, 2017; Schotte <i>et al.</i> , 2017
Inadequate education and skills	ILO, 2021; Reddy & Mncwango, 2021; Goldman <i>et al.</i> , 2021; Bhorat & Khan, 2018
Value Systems, Human Niches – thinking systems	Beck <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Beck & Cowan, 2014; Viljoen & Laubscher, 2015; Laubscher, 2013
Victimisation and inequality – Drama Triangle	Karpman; 1968; Friedman, 2021; Clark, 2020; Johnson, 2020; Lac & Donaldson, 2020; Banker, 2018; Jaka and Shava, 2018; Burns <i>et al.</i> , 2018
No self-esteem, self-doubt – Personal authority	Francis <i>et al.</i> , 2020; Feder & Yu, 2020; Matthews, 2020; Doi, 2019
Income and inequality	ILO, 2020; Francis <i>et al.</i> , 2020; Feder, 2019; Sarlo, 2019; Lilenstein <i>et al.</i> , 2018
Dependence on government social grants	Devereux, 2021; Head, 2021; BusinessTech, 2021c; Chipfupa and Wale, 2020; Granlund & Hochfeld, 2020; Mackett, 2020; Satumba <i>et al.</i> , 2017
Cleaning as a steppingstone	Boschman <i>et al.</i> , 2021; Schnabel, 2021; Dawson & Fouksman, 2020; Hollis, 2020; Feder & Yu, 2020;

Primary Research Findings	Literature Review References
Chronic poverty	Von Fintel, 2021; BHRRC, 2020; Bowen <i>et al.</i> , 2020; Charles, 2020; Dubay, 2020; Shepherd <i>et al.</i> , 2019; Grills <i>et al.</i> , 2017;
Limited thinking, planning, and recognition	Sanei, 2020; Beck <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Lilenstein <i>et al.</i> , 2018; Sheehy-Skeffington & Rea, 2017; Viljoen & Laubscher, 2015; Beck & Cowan, 2014
Cripples competency building and advancement	Bhorat & Khan, 2018; Sofo & Wicks, 2017
Need for competency building for upliftment	ILO, 2021; Chipfupa & Wale, 2020; Sanei, 2020; Prakash <i>et al.</i> , 2015
Emancipation from poverty	Charles, 2020; Cilliers, 2021; Diwakar, 2020

Since the study was already grounded in data, theory from the existing literature was used to support the building of an analytical narrative that includes actions and interventions for the upliftment of the African female working poor. Emerging themes from the primary research was triangulated.

4.4.3 Actions and interventions for upliftment

A list of the references consulted to triangulate the primary and literature review findings regarding actions and interventions for upliftment is contained in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10: Triangulating the primary and literature review findings – Interventions

Primary Research Findings	Literature References
Cleaners	
<p>Realise the need for upliftment, personal authority, self-confidence, and resilience</p> <p>Showing interest, willingness, readiness, and availability</p> <p>Seek information and communication, and apply for training</p>	<p>Craig, 2021; Bowen <i>et al.</i>, 2020; Sanei, 2020; Béné <i>et al.</i>, 2016, Goodman <i>et al.</i>, 2017</p> <p>Schnabel, 2021; Sanei, 2020; CirclesUSA, (n.d.)</p> <p>EHRC, 2014</p>
Business	
<p>Promoting health and well-being</p>	<p>Dirani <i>et al.</i>, 2020; Research & Markets, 2020; Hoffman & Compton, 2019</p>
<p>Communicating vacancies, learnerships, and training</p>	<p>EHRC, 2014</p>
<p>Motivation</p>	<p>Theron, 2020;</p>
<p>Strategise for training and upliftment</p>	
<p>Change worker thinking (mindset)</p>	<p>Karpman, 1968; Beck & Cowan, 2014; Sanei, 2020; Lac & Donaldson, 2020</p>
<p>Skills training, job opportunities, and upliftment</p>	<p>ILO, 2021; Research & Markets, 2020</p>
<p>Providing digital access and user training</p>	<p>Dirani <i>et al.</i>, 2020; Peer <i>et al.</i>, 2020</p>
Government	
<p>Providing education and skills training for upliftment</p>	<p>Francis, Valodia & Webster, 2020; Atake & Ali, 2019; Samuel <i>et al.</i>, 2018; Sulla & Zikhali, 2018; Feder & Yu, 2020</p>

Primary Research Findings	Literature References
Providing job opportunities, internships, and entrepreneurship	SARS, 2020; Feder & Yu, 2020
Provide infrastructure and transport	Jain <i>et al.</i> , 2020; Peer <i>et al.</i> , 2020; Wilson & Magam, 2018

Some category relations proved not to have the backing from data and had to be collapsed under subcategories or discarded. Replication was claimed whenever two or more cases supported a statement to ensure the validity of the findings. Furthermore, a large body of literature was considered to rigorously compare the findings with the primary research.

4.4 CONCLUSION

The chapter's first objective was to present the primary research findings constructed from 22 personal in-depth interviews with low-wage cleaners, a focus group discussion with workers who progressed in their careers, and a focus group of company career advancers or experts. The study aims to derive a competency-building framework for the upliftment of the African female working poor in the contract cleaning industry in South Africa. Data were compared and theorised according to their early upbringing, education and learning, causal circumstances, life and work conditions, financial circumstances and ambitions, and actions and interventions for competency building and upliftment. Three overarching themes or sub-ordinate categories developed from the data, namely education and learning, poverty as causality and product of inequality, and actions and interventions for the upliftment of the working poor were theorised.

After completing an independent analysis of the primary research data, theoretical constructs from the literature review were triangulated with the findings from the constructivist grounded theory to support the development of a new theory in the form of an analytical narrative in Chapter 5. The narrative will be followed by a competency-building framework derived from the theory grounded in data. The framework will also be presented in Chapter 5 as an application derived from the research findings in this chapter.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

Poverty is multidimensional. It extends beyond money incomes to education and advancement of one's own culture and social organisation

– Atal Bihari Vajpayee (2000: n.p).

5.1 INTRODUCTION

South Africa has a fast-growing population of over 60 million, including diverse nationalities, tribes, clans, groups, colours, languages, and religions (WHO, 2021; Luis, 2020). Each has its own culture, coined by the late Archbishop Tutu as the “Rainbow Nation” in post-apartheid South Africa. However, in contradiction to late President Mandela’s dreams, most people still live in a divide with little common interest or sense of belonging, feeling too different to merge or understand each other’s Value Systems or thinking systems (Beck *et al.*, 2018; Viljoen, 2017; Laubscher, 2013). Moreover, due to the social and economic divide, more than half the population lives in collective poverty, making South Africa the most unequal country, with an inequality coefficient of 63 on the Gini index (World Bank, 2021a; 2021b). Hence, the relativist approach taken for this study was that multiple realities exist, and different opinions are linked to knowledge, truth, and morality within a specific culture, society, and historical perspective. The argument is that no impression or decision can be accepted outright and might change according to how people think at a specific moment in a particular environment.

Furthermore, paid employment has been deemed the primary means of living a better life (Boschman *et al.*, 2021; Dawson & Fouksman, 2020; Feder & Yu, 2020). However, research findings have confirmed that low income, irregular employment, insufficient job opportunities, and too many dependents have increased poverty (Anciano, 2021; Goldman *et al.*, 2021; ILO, 2020). The inference is that a low wage might not free the poor from the intergenerational cycle of poverty in which they lived for many years (Von Fintel, 2021; BHRRC, 2020; Schnabel, 2021; Feder & Yu, 2020). Business challenges were complex before the COVID-19 pandemic and have since become more complicated due to the people involved (Sanei, 2020).

The long-lasting COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated poverty, trapping more citizens in mediocre and inadequate education, low or no income, and a fight to survive relentless poverty (Anciano, 2021; Goldman *et al.*, 2021; ILO, 2020; Gammarano, 2019). More than 2.2 million workers have been retrenched since the beginning of the pandemic, of which the majority are African women (Casale & Shepherd, 2021; Devereux, 2021). However, due to the absence of males, these strong, uneducated and low-skilled, African females head large households rearing South Africa’s next generation of adults and leaders in these deprived conditions (World Bank, 2021a; 2021b; Brewer, 2020; le Roux *et al.*, 2020; Fouché *et al.*, 2020; UNICEF, 2020). Current social dynamics challenge personal, business and government strategies to devise mechanisms for uplifting the poor and working poor in South Africa (Beck *et al.*, 2018; de Groot & Lemanski, 2021; Horwood *et al.*, 2021).

Because the researcher is actively involved with African female contract cleaners in the contract cleaning industry, the working poverty crisis urged her to research the workplace problem for a resolution. The observed phenomenon was that elevated levels of

unemployment and the low level of education skills required for most contract cleaning jobs enable employers to recruit new employees effortlessly, thereby actively negating the need for skills development for upliftment and impeding the ability of the African female working poor in this sector to break the poverty cycle. Consequently, the aim was to derive a competency-building framework for the upliftment of the African female working poor in the contract cleaning industry in South Africa. An interpretivist-constructivist epistemology supported the interactive nature of the study. Therefore, a critical inquiry seemed applicable to explore the African females' perceptions of her education and life and work conditions to address inequality and gaps in her upliftment and emancipation. Accordingly, answers were searched for the following sub-questions:

- i. How can the work conditions of the African female working poor contract cleaners in South Africa, and the experiences thereof, be described?
- ii. What are the learning and career ambitions of the African female working poor contract cleaners in South Africa?
- iii. What are the concepts and constructs relating to the poor and working poor in South Africa?
- iv. What practical insights could be obtained about the needs and upliftment of the African female working poor contract cleaners in South Africa?
- v. What competency-building framework can be constructed to enable the upliftment of the African female working poor contract cleaners in South Africa?

A constructivist grounded theory method was used to collect and analyse multiple truths and realities through personal in-depth interviews with 22 African low-wage contract cleaners in the company. The cleaning company also served as the research environment. The women voiced their perceptions and experiences around their developing years, education and learning, causal circumstances, life at work and outside work, and financial conditions and ambitions. The data were compared and confirmed with data from a focus group of five women who progressed in the company through training and learnerships (Focus Group 1). Afterwards, data from a focus group of six company managers (Focus Group 2) were analysed to triangulate the data from all three sources. At the end of each data collection session, the participants were requested to indicate what they perceived the cleaners, businesses, and government could do to uplift the working poor. Finally, the primary findings were triangulated with theoretical constructs from the literature to add rigour and congruence to the constructivist grounded theory.

The three overarching themes developed from the data were: education and learning; poverty as a causality and product of inequality, and actions and interventions for upliftment. The three themes were combined into a new theory discussed as an analytical narrative in the following sections. The analytical narrative will lead towards proposing a competency-building framework for application in the cleaning services company.

The reader should please note that, towards the end of the chapter, the typical rigour of describing tables fully below their placement was omitted. By then, as researcher, it was not possible to continue due to health reasons. Together with her supervisor, they decided to submit her own work rather than to strive for correctness of presentation.

5.2 AFRICAN FEMALE WORKING POOR IN THE CONTRACT CLEANING INDUSTRY IN SOUTH AFRICA

For years, numerous low-skilled, unqualified, and marginalised African females from urban and rural areas have flocked to registered and smaller contract cleaning companies with overlapping vulnerable employment structures (du Toit & Heinecken, 2021; Schnabel, 2021; Research & Markets, 2020; Ntsie, 2020; Banker *et al.*, 2018; Kaine *et al.*, 2018;). Most of these women never had a job before due to inadequate education, low skills, inexperience, and rare opportunities. Therefore, they applied for a contract cleaning job out of desperation for an income (ILO, 2021; Von Fintel, 2021). Because their mothers were housewives or domestic workers who struggled to survive, they knew that a cleaning job requires low skill and training and is more challenging than a full-time office job (du Toit, 2020; Kaine *et al.*, 2018). Furthermore, though hourly remuneration is based on a minimum wage negotiated by the cleaning labour bargaining councils, cleaners still own a low-wage salary, which is better than no income (Feder & Yu, 2020; Feder, 2019). As a result, these women remain trapped in the cycle of working poverty from which they cannot escape. They do not have enough time to gain extra money or education while caring for their dependents on their meagre salaries (Von Fintel, 2021; Schnabel, 2021; BHRRC, 2020; Feder & Yu, 2020).

5.3 EDUCATION AND LEARNING

Inadequate education and limited skills caused by underprivileged life conditions in early upbringing negatively influence African females' work opportunities, ambitions, career planning, and emancipation (Craig, 2021; ILO, 2021; Reddy & Mncwango, 2021; Goldman *et al.*, 2021; Ntsie, 2020). Twenty (90.91 %) of the low-wage contract cleaners were born and grew up during the Apartheid years in poor urban or segregated areas. Naledi's (P9) story (captured in section 4.2.1) offered a brief insight into the life of a 53-year-old cleaner who inherited poverty from her parents and grandparents and passed it on to her children and grandchildren. Naledi (P9) and her family depend heavily on social welfare grants for her disabled husband and son and her two grandchildren, totalling an amount of ZAR 4 700 monthly. Her salary of ZAR 3 990 supplements the social welfare grants after 18 years of working for three contract cleaning companies at the same hospital.

In contrast, Clody (P22), aged 23 years and the youngest of six children, grew up in rural poverty with a housewife mother and a father who mowed lawns. However, she completed her national diploma (N6) in Electrical Engineering on a government bursary. Owing to not finding an internship in the engineering field during COVID-19 to obtain her certificate, Clody (P22) applied for a job in the current cleaning services company. During her interview, she displayed a Blue and Orange thinking system with strong self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and business orientation (Beck *et al.*, 2018; Viljoen, 2017; Beck & Cowan, 2015). Her ambition is to manage her own electrical engineering and catering business once she saves up enough money. She mastered her cleaning job with great optimism and pride while applying for internships at businesses like Eskom and Transnet.

The second youngest cleaner, Thandiwe (P21), 25 years old, completed her National Diploma (N4) in Hospitality and Tourism on a government bursary. She is the fifth of seven children raised in Hillbrow, Johannesburg, by a security guard father and a housewife mother. While busy obtaining her practical experience in the hotel industry, COVID-19 struck, and Thandiwe (P21) was retrenched. The cleaning services company was the only place where she could find a temporary job. Thandiwe (P21) displayed high resilience when she reported

temping for only a few hours per month while caring for her two young children living with her parents (Craig, 2021; Bowen *et al.*, 2020; Sanei, 2020). Her father and mother receive SASSA pensions, while she receives grants for her children. Her ambition is to become a social worker without government support. The government has already paid for her school and college education.

The findings repeatedly revealed that large households with parents having little or no education and an insufficient income suffer chronic poverty from which they cannot escape except when one of them spirals up the Value System to a higher thinking order (Beck *et al.*, 2018; Beck & Cowan, 2014). Sibongile's (P11) father was a construction worker who sent home money for a household of ten members at the end of each month. She echoed the voices of many other women when she complained that they were

...always suffering because there was no money, and we were too many - Sibongile (P11).

The absence of male figures in family structures aggravates household poverty resulting in the female working poor heavily depending on social grants (Atake & Ali, 2019; Beegle & Christiaensen, 2019; World Bank, 2019). Their emotional strongboxes called up memories of households headed by women due to fathers who died, worked far from home, parents who separated or divorced, or just not knowing who their fathers were (Vidojević & Chipkin, 2021, Dawson & Fouksman, 2020). These single mothers had no income except for selling clothes, fruit and vegetables, achar, bread, or chips. Whatever these women did to accrue money was not enough to keep their families from living in poverty. Interpretations were that mothers who constantly live under stress are likely to suffer depression, chronic anger, and suicidal thoughts and dump their emotions on their children (Felix *et al.*, 2019; Shatté *et al.*, 2017). Busi, as an example, lived with her mother, grandmother, four siblings, and ten cousins in KwaZulu-Natal. Her mother's high anxiety and depression caused Busi to suffer an unhappy childhood. After not completing her internship for a teaching diploma, she became a cleaner due to the need to contribute money to the household.

My mom never worked. It was a crazy house [with 17 people]. I did not grow up happily with my mother. I was so afraid of my mom. She was frustrated and not the happiest woman in her life. My father worked in the mines in the Free State. He only came home twice a year. Father sent money home only.

Most cleaners lived with their grandmothers as babies together with other siblings and cousins, while the mothers worked as domestic cleaners. Lerato (P17) stated that she grew up with her grandmother and aunt because her mother did not care about her. Patience (P19) reached deep into her heart when she acknowledged that she had had an unhappy childhood because of not receiving the love she needed. Moreover, the cleaners and their mothers were the primary caregivers even when the fathers or grandfathers were around. All were living within a Beige or Purple primal thinking system with the only desire to make it through each month (Beck & Cowan, 2014; Viljoen & Viljoen; n.d.; Laubscher, 2013).

Furthermore, findings indicated that long-term childhood poverty, deprivation, and malnutrition cause a higher risk of mental, cognitive, and functional disability, depression, vulnerability to ill-health, and a greater possibility of dementia in the elderly (le Roux & Walsh, 2020; Modjadji & Madiba, 2019). Lesedi (P14) displayed cognitive disability and described herself as a special child who was "a bit slow in everything." Her mother was a domestic worker while also working

at a nursing home and a laundry. She struggled with Lesedi (P14) around and left her living with uncles and aunts. Apart from cruelty and abuse, Lesedi (P14) survived on pap (maize meal porridge) and cabbage with ten other members in the household. As a result, Lesedi (P14) could not escape the poverty cycle with four kids living with her and her mother in a two-bedroomed house in Soweto. She had the first two kids with a man who disappeared and another two with an abusive man who committed suicide when she took him to court. Her eldest son attends a special school for slow learners. As a result of previous life conditions, Lesedi (P14) gets into financial debt to offer her children what she did not have.

The cleaners' unfettered recollections of their early pregnancies explained the women's lack of life skills and education when they were young. For example, Makhanane (P18) fell pregnant at 16, was confused about her condition, self-aborted the child, and fell pregnant again with a much older neighbour who seduced her for money while her mother was at work. Lala (P6) fell pregnant when she was in Grade 11. She went back to school and fell pregnant again after two years. Her mother then told her to go and work to feed her kids, and she started looking for a job under challenging circumstances. These stories repeated themselves, triggering the idea that Beige and low Purple thinking causes unempowered, impoverished girls not to act and think responsibly (Beck *et al.*, 2018; Beck & Cowan, 2014). The inference is that once girls and women are uplifted through education, they would grow personal authority and resilience to setbacks and make every effort to improve their lives.

Another obstacle is that the Purple human niche often requires a woman to prove her fertility and confirm her womanhood through bearing children (Ataki & Ali, 2019). Such thinking contributes to the growing number of poor women and children in Sub-Saharan countries (ILO, 2020). It also augments women's exclusion from strategic decision making and denial of economic, social, and human development opportunities. Consequences for these women are a lack and exclusion from economic, social, and cultural rights (Plagerson *et al.*, 2019; Grills *et al.*, 2017). For this reason, women and girls still face violence and unnamed indignities in their development and adult years. One of the career progressors repeated her father's advice to her.

After my second child, my father said, you are a woman now. You must find a job to look after your children. Let your job be your husband.

Her father's words also emphasised another discerning aspect of low-educated African males' paternal responsibility toward women and children. Young males fluctuating between poverty, contract work, entrepreneurship, and mass unemployment echoed feelings of fear, social insecurity, and anger toward female emancipation at the poorly paid end of the labour market (Vidojević & Chipkin, 2021; Dubbeld, 2013). These men have entered the Drama Triangle (Karpman, 1968) as the Angry men or Persecutors blaming the social security system, women in low-paid jobs, those receiving child support grants, and the female elderly receiving pension grants (Ferguson & Li, 2018). Their opinions are rather to abandon a low income, and paternal responsibility than have social grants replace their provider role. Even those men with more lucrative salaries dispute who deserves a share of the government's wealth creation and distribution. According to their Purple thinking receding into Beige (Beck *et al.*, 2018), they ought to be the breadwinners engaging in well-paid labour and entrepreneurship (Dawson & Fouksman, 2020).

A concern for the cleaning industry is that the female working poor do not typically perceive Cleaning and Hygiene as a professional career. Reasons were suffering humiliation and

disrespect from people in their work environment and the community (Schnabel, 2021; Ntsie, 2020; Feder, 2019; Filandri & Struffolino, 2018; Lilenstein *et al.*, 2018). In response, few women perceived themselves as professional or permanent cleaners and showed no pride in letting friends and society know they were cleaners. The reason is that the public perceives cleaning as a dirty job for the uneducated poor. Busi (P15) summarised the cleaners' opinions as:

Cleaners do not see cleaning as a professional job. They just see it as a means of income. Before offering training, uplift their thinking first. Trainers must motivate cleaners to attend training and explain how it can help them. Cleaners do not take training seriously... *I tell people lots of stories, but I never tell them that I am a cleaner, especially those I went to school with.*

Like many others taking up low-paid jobs, the women anticipated cleaning as a steppingstone towards a more lucrative job in the labour ecosystem (Boschman *et al.*, 2021). However, literature expounded that low-wage employment is no self-correcting issue. People might get stuck in low-wage working poverty for the rest of their productive years (Feder & Yu, 2020). The argument is supplemented by those cleaners who had worked from three to eighteen years in the same position. Interestingly, women who display high resilience seem to cope better in challenging times owing to their ambition to educate and work themselves out of poverty, which depends on their competency building and work opportunities (Jain *et al.*, 2020; Shatté *et al.*, 2017). Thandiwe (P21) and Busi (P15) displayed resilience in their statements:

I became a cleaner because you would rather get up and get dirty to reach your goal.

Cleaning can be a steppingstone for somebody to get to their dreams.

Nevertheless, cleaning jobs also have other downsides. The uneducated working poor (Feder, 2019) get treated as invisible in the workplace. Most of them are neither acknowledged, greeted, or respected while cleaning (Ntsie, 2020). Interestingly, Viljoen and Viljoen, (n.d.) and Viljoen (2015) described Beige as the invisible system. If Beige's identity is disturbed, they might show public distress, withdraw, or fly. Vulnerability entered Lesedi's (P14) eyes when she repeated that

Bosses do not see that cleaners also have feelings. Cleaners also go to the toilet and cry.

The inference is that the cleaning industry must advocate contract cleaning as a profession to the public by introducing cleaning as a professional job that provides training and development. The career progressors advised that the South African cleaning services could play a key role in uplifting the African female working poor by enhancing their social standing, health and well-being, vulnerability, job satisfaction, competencies, and salaries.

So, we need to try and change people's minds on how to treat us because you have a cleaner, it is a mom, a sister, a wife like we are everything, and just to go back to being a cleaner doesn't mean I didn't go to school with people with degrees and bachelor's and diplomas that are doing the cleaning because of work is scarce now. So, when they look down on us. I don't understand why.

It became apparent that most cleaners were unaware of training and obtaining qualifications in cleaning and hygiene for advancement in the industry. Moreover, they seemed ignorant of enhancing their self-esteem and resilience to improve their social and economic conditions through career planning and education. However, most cleaners complained about not receiving information and communication about vacancies, training, and learnerships at their work sites. It became evident that cleaners do not have the skill and ability to access relevant information about competency building and upliftment.

Insights are that the working poor urgently needs information and motivation to improve their competencies and opportunities for advancement. Beige and Purple cannot easily plan forward concerning their life and work conditions as they are busy finding the means to survive and care for extended families as part of their kinship. They need support and training to build resilience and personal authority for shaping their world through career planning, development, and budgeting. Accordingly, the working poor needs better salaries, experience, knowledge and insight through business and government interventions. However, the reality is that some working poor will remain where they are. Not all employees would grab the opportunity to attend training and learnerships for bettering themselves due to little motivation, lack of self-esteem and personal authority, or being stuck in their current Value Systems. One of the career paths progressors wisely stated that

*We can't all be doctors; we need cleaners, and cleaners have an important job.
People must accept this as a professional job.*

The stories that reached deep into the women's hearts opened a world of struggle to survive the intergenerational poverty cycle that continues into the next generation's lives (Charles, 2020). Implications are that they would stay trapped in chronic poverty unless there are actions and interventions to help them break the poverty cycle (Dubay, 2020). Working poverty causes isolation and a lack of recognition and dignity and limits education and training for specialised skills and upliftment opportunities (Schnabel, 2020; Lilenstein *et al.*, 2018). Furthermore, interventions aiming at enhancing and optimising the African female's well-being must consider economic, social, and cultural aspects that affect their life and work conditions. The argument is that the working poor cleaners need training and competency building to uplift them personally, socially, and economically.

5.4 POVERTY AS CAUSALITY AND PRODUCT OF INEQUALITY

A discussion on poverty as causality and product of inequality in this section dovetails with discussions in the previous sections. The implication is that poverty, survival, and vulnerability play a pivotal role in the African female's inadequate education and limited skills in the event of taking up low-wage and undignified jobs (De Groot & Lemanski, 2021; Horwood *et al.*, 2021; ILO, 2021; Reddy & Mncwango, 2021). Moreover, the Value Systems in which they were reared, inequality, and low self-esteem prevent them from personal ambition, upliftment, and emancipation (Beck *et al.*, 2018; Beck & Cowan, 2014; Viljoen & Laubscher, 2015).

Adverse financial circumstances and inequality have caused chronic poverty and dependence on government social grants since 1998 (Plagerson *et al.*, 2019; Satumba, 2017). Consequently, these grants have become the major sustainment programme for alleviating woman and child poverty in South Africa. Accordingly, around 13 million children received social grant assistance by the end of March 2021 (Devereux, 2021:1-27; Hall, 2021), while the total number of South Africans collecting social grants has increased to more than 31 % of the population

(Granlund & Hochfeld, 2020). By 2021, this number climbed to 19 million, and almost a third of South African citizens relied on social grants for poverty relief (BusinessTech, 2021c).

Furthermore, research findings confirmed that poverty causes Purple thinking to revert to Beige (Beck *et al.*, 2018; Viljoen & Viljoen, n.d.). Small (P3), a temporarily appointed cleaner, displayed typical Beige thinking during her in-depth interview. She lives alone in a shack without a partner or other support and temps for three days per month at a monthly wage of ZAR 548. In her own words:

I live to survive.

She cares for herself, her mother, and her two children living with her mother with this money. In addition, Small (P3) pays ZAR 50 for transport every time she goes to work. It confirms that Beige can survive on hardly any money (Viljoen & Viljoen, n.d.; Laubscher, 2013). Although Small (P3) wants to complete her Grade 12 for a permanent job, there is no money to further her studies.

Correspondingly, Makhoti (P1) could not find a job with her Grade 12 qualification until she applied for a cleaning job at the company. She is the only working family member and takes care of her mother, sisters and their children, and her child, altogether ten people, on ZAR 3 700 per month. Her lifestyle displays Beige as she works from 07:00 until 19:00 and arrives home too late to help her eight-year-old son with his schoolwork. She lives with him in a bedroom in Soweto and demonstrated feelings of hopelessness during the interview. After paying all expenses, she has ZAR 200 left for food. Makhoti (P1), as with most cleaners, would do anything to provide a better future for her child. She echoed it in the interview by saying:

I take one day at a time.

Loveday (P7) has been a temporary worker for the past three years, working four days per month only for a salary of ZAR 700. Her boyfriend earns around ZAR 2 000 to ZAR 2 500 per month. Her ambition is to receive a salary of ZAR 3 500 to ZAR 4 000 per month. They live in a garage, and Loveday (P7) sells cakes [vetkoek] at the taxi rank for extra money. She was not aware of company training as she did not want to confront her employer. Her parents had no education, and her two kids, fifteen and six, live with their uneducated grandmother. Loveday (P7) does not see or speak to them often. She asked for a mentor to direct and help her as she works by herself cleaning a church. The inference is that her children would not escape the intergenerational poverty cycle unless her thinking and self-confidence are uplifted for her to be ready for competency building and advancement.

These are merely a few incidents drawn from the stories of the working poor cleaners struggling and hoping to find a better job and salary. Indications are that a change in education, reinforcement of inherent personal authority, and long-term support from businesses and the government could help these women exploit beyond their current and available jobs (Beck *et al.*, 2018; Sanei, 2020; Prakash *et al.*, 2015). Furthermore, it would benefit the cleaning services industry to offer quality training and learnerships to support company prestige and professionalism, cleaners' dignity and respect, and their growth and competency building. In contrast, if disadvantaged female cleaners are denied access to quality education and job opportunities, they cannot contribute to the profession and business's progress and do not benefit from any accumulated growth (Swaroop, 2017).

The inference is that working poverty impacts and is influenced by household structure, the number of dependents and salary earners, and the number of child and pensioner grants in the family (Filandri & Struffolino, 2018; Lilenstein *et al.*, 2018). It has been found that poverty is rarely linked to individual behaviour as people display behavioural values typical of other humans on that level (Graves, 1974:72). Hence, behaviour and actions are typically related to social problems in the wake of reaching a balance between life and sharing resources (Sofu & Wicks, 2017). Graves stated it incorrect to assume that human nature is fixed according to one set of values by which people live (Laubscher, 2013). Poverty and behaviour form part of several interrelated issues in which learning and development are linked to individual and group decision making (Beck *et al.*, 2018; Mahler, 2020). Most cleaners do not experience a work-life balance as they are too busy working, travelling between work and home, and caring for their families. The inference can be made that once people escape working poverty and live on a good salary, psychologically, work-life balance becomes more important (Haar *et al.*, 2018). A career progressor inevitably stated:

You are stuck...So being a cleaner, I feel like the government is under looking [ignoring] us. Not doing enough is not giving us what we deserve. You only work for food. That is the main thing. You cannot even take your kids to the restaurant. I couldn't. I was trapped. I couldn't see the light.

Perceptions are that resilience and a positive outlook play a prominent role in the cleaner's ambition and aspirations towards her dreams. For example, Busi (P15) and her husband live in a shack in Alexandra with their two boys of four and two. Between her and her husband, they care for eleven people. However, she was confident in advancing her career by being trained as a facilitator in the cleaning company. Indeed, typical Beige thinking is fixed on survival without planning for the future. Queen (P10) and her life partner of 21 years live in a room in Alexandra. She never knew her father, and when her mom passed away, she, her three sisters and two brothers lived on their own in Limpopo. The poverty cycle repeated itself with her son of twenty living on his own in Limpopo while he keeps failing Grade 10. Her partner earns ZAR 850 per month. She receives a salary of ZAR 3 800 per month but is unaware of company training after working for the company for two years as a temp and in a permanent cleaning position for two years. Queen (P10) spends ZAR 1 000 on transport, her rent is ZAR 1 000, ZAR 800 goes to her son, ZAR 800 to her late sister's children, and then she has ZAR 600, sometimes, ZAR 400 for food for herself and her partner. Queen (P10) has no upliftment plans and cannot see how the company or government can help her. Typical of Beige, she does not like other people and prefers to be left alone (Viljoen & Viljoen, n.d.).

It seems critical for Purple that their children have better lives than they did and for which they view a decent education as vital (Laubscher, 2013). Most of them do not want their children to become cleaners due to low income and little opportunity to advance. It became apparent that Beige and low Purple being part of the poverty cycle resulted in 60 % of cleaners not attending to their children's education and personal growth. Some or all their children live in rural areas with grandmothers or other families. The inference is that if children could live with their mothers, they might have a better chance of exposure to their love and caring and educational events in urban areas. If not, the consequences are substantial that their children will also grow up in Beige and low Purple thinking. These children would stay part of the poverty cycle unless the African female working poor are exposed to training and competency building for their upliftment and emancipation.

The conclusion is that poverty has a crippling effect on competency building and people advancement (Bhorat & Khan, 2018). It breaks down personal authority and self-esteem and gives rise to self-doubt (Francis *et al.*, 2020; Feder & Yu, 2020; Matthews, 2020; Doi, 2019). Suitable jobs are scarce, and young people who have not accelerated in relevant subjects at school would find it hard to obtain education and training afterwards (Francis *et al.*, 2020; Feder & Yu, 2020; Matthews, 2020; Doi, 2019). Furthermore, most poor women would hardly survive without social grants for their children and elderly mothers, thus making them highly dependent on the government's social welfare (Devereux, 2021; Head, 2021; BusinessTech, 2021c; Chipfupa and Wale, 2020; Granlund & Hochfeld, 2020; Mackett, 2020). Beige and low Purple typically do not plan though child grants are available only until a child turns eighteen (Sanei, 2020; Beck *et al.*, 2018; Lilenstein *et al.*, 2018). However, Purple is concerned with the survival and well-being of its kind, and findings have indicated that people can call on family and close friends in difficult times (Beck, 2006; Beck *et al.*, 2018).

Whether all cleaners see themselves fit and resilient to accept personal authority for their education and learning remains a question. However, research findings have indicated that there will always be cleaners who will remain cleaners even though they receive the opportunity to educate and uplift themselves from chronic poverty.

Cleaners do not know that they have dreams — Busi (P15).

5.5 ACTIONS AND INTERVENTIONS FOR UPLIFTMENT

This discussion concerns actions and interventions for the upliftment of the African female poor in the contract cleaning industry in South Africa. It is once more interlinked with the discussions in the previous two sections. The difference is that prior discussions focused on the causalities and results of poverty and insecure life and work conditions, which pointed to insufficient education and learning. This section attends to conditions for action, strategies, and interventions for competency building, advancement, and the upliftment of the African female working poor in the contract cleaning industry in South Africa.

Findings indicated that the working poor is left with little self-esteem and personal authority due to long-lasting periods of self-doubt, low wages, and inequality. The career progressors were asked what had changed to make them realise their need for competency building and job advancement. The understanding was that cleaners must reach a point where they grasp their need for advancement (Craig, 2021; Bowen *et al.*, 2020; Sanei, 2020). Moreover, supervisors and managers play a significant role in building employees' confidence, steering them towards learnerships, and helping them plan and develop their careers. For example, a Focus Group 1 training instructor reverberated her entrance into the cleaning services in desperation to care for her family but immediately decided not to stay a cleaner.

If you're not self-motivated, no one else is gonna do the motivation for you and if you know what you want in life. Well, for me, I started working when I was 19 years old. Because my mom lost her job and I was still in school, I needed to get a job and pay for my studies. So, my mum had suffered from a stroke. Even now, I am the breadwinner at home. I know the situation at home, and I went to school, and I am a cleaner! But I didn't want to do this cleaning anymore. This is not how I envisioned my future to be. So, I needed to push myself to get out of there.

From the start of her career, she showed personal authority and commitment to her work and did more than expected. Therefore, she was recognised, respected and trusted with other responsibilities in the hospital ward where she cleaned. Resilience and determination, the right attitude, and strong motivation propelled her into training and advancement in the company. She searched for vacancies, communicated frequently, and asked for help whenever she applied for a position or learnership.

Cleaners need to dream and fantasise about a better life. They must show self-motivation, find out about courses, and apply for training. If a cleaner acts invisibly [even though she has an education], nobody will see her or care about her because she does not communicate and show interest in upliftment.

It is finding help, and it is talking to people...

Implications are that employees need to show interest in their jobs and the cleaning company. They should be available when opportunities arise and willing and ready for training and improving their competencies (Schnabel, 2021; Sanei, 2020). Research also indicated that good management and relations between managers and their colleagues contribute to job satisfaction and growth (Segal, 2017). Accordingly, cleaners should be motivated and encouraged to apply for training, develop themselves, and enhance their competencies for upliftment. Women who do not show natural flexibility and resilience could be coached and mentored to change their mindset towards training and upliftment in the cleaning services industry (Karpman, 1968; Beck & Cowan, 2014; Sanei, 2020; Lac & Donaldson, 2020).

Company management should accept that some members will display Beige thinking. They will keep to themselves and have little ambition and dreams for the future because of no money or means to improve their learning. If persuaded to attend training, they would either hide or flee. Research has indicated that some with a Beige thinking structure would adapt different thinking structures in the spiral, but a percentage of Beige thinking would always remain (Beck *et al.*, 2018, Laubscher, 2013; Viljoen & Viljoen, n.d.). For example, Loveday (P7) stated that she had no qualifications, was unaware of training, and could not see how the company could intervene. Loveday (P7)'s outlook on life was

No-one can help you about money, all the people they cannot, no one can help you, even I, I do not have nothing, all the people say, even ... I do not have it, no one can help with money. Even no-one, if I have a problem, we must plan.

Therefore, logic cannot be applied to change Beige and low Purple behaviour and their way of learning. Their development can also not be managed by typical systematic Blue organisational strategies (Laubscher & Viljoen, 2014; Viljoen & Viljoen, n.d.). Thus, Beige and Purple's training must be delivered according to their thinking systems. Purple attracts its own kind and consults relevant parties where needed (Viljoen *et al.*, 2018). The inference is that purple people make ideal trainers of Beige and Purple because they understand them, communicate consistently, talk in pictures, and show learners how to do the work (Laubscher, 2013; Laubscher & Viljoen, 2014).

Research findings further indicated that businesses should strategise for training and learnerships and actively contribute to building cleaner competencies. In the event, vacancies, learnerships, and skills training should be available and communicated to all cleaners to promote health and well-being (ILO, 2021; Dirani *et al.*, 2020; Research & Markets, 2020;

Hoffman & Compton, 2019). In addition, digital access should be provided to websites and other resources together with end-user training. Furthermore, the government should actively work towards providing quality education and training, good job opportunities, internships, and entrepreneurship.

Accordingly, the grounded theory indicates that there is no other choice for South African businesses and the government but to uplift the African female working poor for their inclusion in its social, economic, and cultural growth. Such a goal can be obtained primarily through education and training, learnerships, and building the female's competencies.

5.6 RESEARCH INSIGHTS

Insights derived from the research are:

- i. People and business transformation and optimisation require people to think, act, and perform differently in the workplace to include all Human Values and thinking systems, especially where education and upliftment of the working poor and professionalism of the contract cleaning company are concerned.
- ii. No matter how well-motivated a cleaner is, she cannot enable her education, competency building, and upliftment by herself. Therefore, organisational thinking, decision-making and training systems must be in place to accommodate different employee abilities and training requirements.
- iii. Those appointed or included to resolve a dilemma should be the same people who noticed the need or issue. People's upliftment will only occur once the need has been satisfied and change becomes noticeable.
- iv. No person can change or develop people or an organisation without help. It requires agreement and input from various change agents in the organisation. Consequently, the organisation transforms through mutual discussion and participation the more people change.
- v. The workers in a services company are as important as the leaders in bringing about change or altering people's concepts about an organisation and its people.
- vi. Not all individuals in an organisation will change. For example, a person might not be genetically, psychologically, or physically prepared to change and accept a more complex way of thinking when life conditions change.
- vii. One person cannot persuade another to transform. A decision to change occurs within the brain and can only manifest and be released from the inside. Often organisation and government interventions do not work due to worker needs and solutions seeming different from the organisation's accepted patterns of thought. For this reason, employees should be encouraged and included in the planning and application of the upliftment process.
- viii. Worker behaviours should be congruent with the organisation's professional values before the public accepts the image.
- ix. An organisation performs as a unit. Therefore, all employees in the system should be connected through communication, competency building, and upliftment.
- x. It is unavoidable that some workers will leave the organisation once they acquire competencies and emancipation through education. Competing enterprises will draw skilled workers if work conditions and salaries appear better in the other organisation. However, it may also happen the other way around.

- xi. The African female working poor in the contract cleaning industry in South Africa needs high resilience to manage setbacks and obtain competencies, a decent salary, and better living conditions.
- xii. To depend on social handouts for sustainable living will not work. Instead, women need freedom through competency building, emancipation, a better income, and social participation.

On reflection, it became apparent that the African female working poor in the South African contract cleaning industry needs training for competency building, upliftment, independence, and social inclusion in the country's financial, economic, cultural, and environmental growth. Moreover, the development of most South African children into adults and leaders lies in the hands of these women. Therefore, it is no longer a case of discussing what should be done for African women but practically applying the research findings. The inference is that freedom from poverty will not happen only through African female inclusivity in political and public decision-making. They need to share in education and learner programmes to uplift their thinking and build their competencies for personal growth and upliftment.

Accordingly, a competency-building framework is proposed as an application in the company under discussion for uplifting the working poor in the contract cleaning company. The expectation is that no cleaner should ever need to repeat Makhanane's (P18) words:

Some cleaners just know a mop.

5.7 COMPETENCY-BUILDING FRAMEWORK

The competency-building framework has been compiled as a culmination of the constructivist grounded theory. It proposes a list of needs, conditions, and practical applications captured throughout the research and analysis for upliftment of the female cleaner in the contract cleaning business. Furthermore, it is a dynamic work document which will be adapted and moderated throughout the upliftment pilot project's planning and performance. The framework consists of three tables listed under the overarching competency-building framework. The tables focus on the needs for job satisfaction of this population; the competencies and skills that businesses can invest in for this sector and proposed ways in which government can address the conditions of the African female poor category.

Table 5.1 focuses on the African female contract cleaners and their need for job satisfaction in the work environment. It is followed by a list of conditions for the upliftment of cleaners in the business. Finally, a list of skills training and work-related competencies is proposed.

Table 5.1: Competency-building framework

African female contract cleaners	
Cleaner needs for job satisfaction in the work environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stability of the cleaning business. • Job rotation. • Equipment availability at all sites, towels, chemicals, and refuge bags. • Appropriate use of chemicals. • Management: awareness of cleaner problems at sites. • Management: visit worksites to take note of events and cleaner treatment. • Area managers: liaise with clients about problems to prevent termination of contracts. • Arrangement of year-end functions for cleaners. • Awards for good work and new competencies. • Access to company management. • Information boards at sites containing printed vacancies, learnerships and training. • Online access to information about vacancies, learnerships and training. • End-user training to access the company’s website and online resources. • Display of goodwill towards employees. • Create a spirit of motivation and encouragement. • Increase salaries through awards and benefits. • Salaries must fit working hours. • Provide mentors and role models for cleaners to speak to. • Allocate jobs to temps close to where they live.

African female contract cleaners

Company's conditions for the upliftment of cleaners

- Honesty with the employer.
- Honesty at the work sites.
- Maintain high levels of hygiene and cleanliness.
- Follow Health and Safety standards.
- Consistency and attentiveness.
- Friendliness, greeting team members and clients.
- Display a positive attitude.
- Act professionally.
- Show interest in advancing the self and the business.
- Sustain the status and growth of the company to keep ahead of competitors.
- Show self-esteem and self-confidence.
- Take pride in what they do.
- Display endurance and resilience.
- Willingness to perform new tasks.
- Willingness and readiness to apply for training and vacancies.
- Speak up when information and help are needed.
- Accept personal authority and responsibility for upliftment.
- Can manage people and administrative tasks.

African female contract cleaners	
Skills training	
Basic skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading and writing (not all cleaners can read and write at adult level). • Completing forms. • Arithmetic/mathematics. • Budgeting.
Personal and time management skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal-setting. Becoming productive with time means constantly improving how the work is done. Time management is not only behavioural, which means setting a goal and working toward it. Many time-management skills depend on thinking processes. The entire team must do their work correctly and work well together. The team leader, supervisor, or manager must identify workers not performing to their ability [potential]. They should receive extra coaching and support to help them improve. • Prioritise items on the task list. Prioritising is getting the task list done and avoiding or eliminating tasks that the cleaner should not be performing. Good practical ideas must be implemented. • Identify conditions that cause the cleaner or team not to perform well or fast enough. • Self-awareness helps the cleaner pay attention and use trial-and-error to work in the best possible way to suit her ability reducing her resistance. The more the cleaner knows about herself, her habits, and the way she likes to work, the easier it is to make wise decisions about how best to manage her time. • Self-motivation. A cleaner must be able to motivate herself to act. Nobody can force her to improve her life conditions. If she advances in her career, she needs accountability. Otherwise, pressure and stress mount up.

African female contract cleaners

Personal and time management skills

- **Focus.** Regardless of what a person does, there will always be something or somebody else competing for her attention. She must learn to focus on one task because multi-tasking causes problems. Single-tasking provides focus and results. Finish the most important task first and then move on to the next most important task.
- **Decision-making.** Every decision affect others. Few cleaning tasks are performed in isolation and need preparation. Therefore, the cleaner or team must decide which tasks to perform first, which ones cannot be done, when a task should be completed, and who can or cannot help another.
- **Planning.** Tasks may overlap and depend on each other. The schedule of others may impact the cleaner’s schedule, and the team should plan before the day starts.
- **Communication skills.** Strong communication skills (not endless chatting and gossiping) will build supportive relationships for career planning, training, and upliftment with others in the company.
 - If the cleaner needs help with a task, she should communicate and explain the task to the other person so that the task is performed to the desired standard.
 - Errors or issues must be raised quickly and explained clearly to ensure necessary adjustments.
 - The quality of communication directly impacts the work to be finished.
 - Must be able to say “NO” in as friendly a way as possible for the person to complete her work.
- **Delegation.** Cleaners should realise when they are not the right person to do the job. There is a difference between being responsible for accomplishing something and being the one who must do the task.
- **Coping skills.** If the cleaners allow setbacks to stop them, they will not attempt anything. Instead, they should learn to control their thoughts and emotions when under pressure.

African female contract cleaners	
Personal authority skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleaners should take responsibility for their own lives and what they can learn in the company before demanding sponsorships for training outside the company. • They should initialise self-improvement. • Turn ideas (dreams, ambitions) into practical actions. • Cleaners should view cleaning as a career and not part of poverty. • Should create a personal development plan. • Career planning and development should be maintained with her manager to ensure her goal.
Emotional intelligence (EI) needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotionally competent people show self-confidence, making them good leaders and team players. • Workers with EI have an optimistic outlook on life, which helps them overcome barriers. • EI can help manage stress, anger, envy, negative emotions, and self-control. • EI builds constructive relationships, helps to complete tasks and supports development. • Resilience (flexibility) is the core of self-control. • Resilience is a skill, and cleaners can learn to be resilient by building their self-confidence and competencies.

African female contract cleaners	
Work-related competencies	
Observational skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleaners, team leaders, and supervisors need observation skills. • Pay attention to what is happening in the job environment and equipment. • What happens after observing a problem? For example, what happens if the vacuum cleaner stops working?
Problem-solving skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instead of complaining, find a solution to the problem. • Make an informed decision about what product is suitable for a particular surface. • How can an issue with or without the team be improved efficiency? • How can an issue within the team be improved? • Report an issue quickly with a solution on how to resolve the problem. • The cleaner should not panic or remove herself from the problem.
Basic IT training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleaners must know how to use a computer or cell phone to log into the company's website for information, vacancies, learnerships, and training. • Training should include access to online resources for learning, administrative tasks and email communication.

Table 5.1 focused on a list of cleaners' needs and recommendations for job satisfaction in the work environment. It was followed by company conditions for the upliftment of cleaners as taken from the research findings. Finally, the proposed skills training and work-related competencies were listed in statements that will be understood by the change agents in the upliftment programme.

Table 5.2 attends to competency building in the business and first focuses on a list of cleaner requests for skills training and upliftment. Next follows a list of company obligations for transformation and optimisation, ending with general comments.

Table 5.2: Competency-building framework: Company

Competency building in the business	
Cleaner requests for skills training and upliftment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote cleaners according to their skills. • Inspect why cleaners stay in one position for many years, are not promoted, and receive low wages. • Transfer cleaners to better positions at other sites. • Open space for others to come in. • HR: verify the cleaner’s qualifications against their wages. • Training department: verify cleaners’ qualifications against their training needs. • Training must be communicated to cleaners at all sites. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Place a computer at each site for the supervisor to access company vacancies, adverts, learnerships, and training. ○ Advertise vacancies on the website. ○ Place information boards at sites with printed vacancies, learnerships and training. • Provide cleaners access to company management. • Create jobs for cleaners who are not mentally gifted but good workers.

Obligations for Transformation and Optimisation

Education and training of employees

- Training programmes must be in place.
- Identify desperate cleaners and provide career planning.
- Identify cleaners with the right attitude for advancement.
- Grow professionals by training and developing those with academic certificates.
- Services SETA requires a Grade 12 for learnerships.
- Arrange recognition of prior learning for cleaners without Grade 12.
- Appoint and advance the right people.
- Provide a talent structure to cleaners indicating the requirements from levels 1 to 10.
- Focus on quality education and training policies to obtain life and work skills.
- Focus on labour market skills and competencies for jobs.
- Retain good workers.
- Retain skilled employees.
- Training must start by uplifting the cleaner's thinking – HOW to think about themselves, their lives, and their jobs.
- Trainers need to teach cleaners HOW to plan their careers and attend competency building training for upliftment.
- The training of employees must be translated to their level of thinking, and cultural dynamics must be considered.
- Train the trainers regularly.
- Employee support and development often need to deal with people who have regressed into survival thinking due to limited economic resources.
- If too much pressure is put on low-level cleaners to learn, they may slip into survival mode and hide.

Education and training of employees

- Most cleaners have a learning system that relies on copying others.
- The organisation should provide “doing” in cleaners’ training and mentoring systems.
- Practical, experiential learning interventions are essential.
- Metaphors should be used whenever possible.
- Family connections should be understood when training is arranged.
- Most cleaners would learn better in a group.
- Regular training is needed. Over time the roles of society or the team may overwrite organisational rules.
- Emotions and perceptions drive cultural and political phenomena and responses.
- Training would improve the cleaners’ financial conditions.
- Provide specialised training for managers and supervisors to manage diverse teams and support the needs of older, pregnant, or disabled workers.
- Acknowledge the cleaner’s training results publicly in newsletters and on the website.
- Provide management awards.
- Create a personal plan, job description, and an annual career planning and development meeting for each cleaner.

Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most cleaners enjoy teamwork and communication. • Workers love to speak personally to their leaders. • If it does not happen, the unions obtain disparate power, and the workers prefer speaking to the unions rather than to management. • Important to note: Workers can quickly be mobilised by any structure that wants power. • African women cleaners attract each other, greet each other every time they meet, and collaborate during work. • Workers need to be consulted and want management access integrated into the system. • Workers want to be respected by all structures because they need a sense of belonging.
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance, structure, policy, and standard operating procedure (Blue) are usually too systematic and inflexible for workers (Purple), and they may ignore these. • Companies should consider how worker identity is constructed. • Managers should not patronise workers with a typical (Blue) management thinking system. • Workers must feel they belong and are consulted for a shared understanding of productivity and discipline. • Workers should be given short-term targets (weekly) for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Organisational strategy and transformation ○ Contracting goal-setting targets ○ Compiling a remuneration strategy ○ Motivating actions ○ Career planning and development

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong thinking (Red) in the organisation shows perseverance, personal authority, needs to be noticed, demands respect, and calls the shots. They (Red) may be troublemakers but also supporters and leaders. • Strong energy (Red) may be the driving force behind a team. These workers love to be the worker of the month and receive individual attention. • If life conditions require a robust and self-assertive person to fight her way up the ranks, Red is the way. • Some workers (Beige and low Purple) need attention and will excel when pushed toward the next learning curve. • Managers and regional managers should show the capability to identify cleaners for upliftment. • Give cleaners a professional mandate. • Provide clear information on employment rights.
<p>Top management structures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many well-functioning organisations are concerned with truth, stability, obedience, meaning, and purpose (Blue thinking). • Behaviour-based safety strategies and standard operating procedures should be part of the ‘HOW’ (Purple) practice. • Management (Blue) follows the rules and structures and wants workers (Purple) to be more structured and motivated for advancement through personal development programmes and performance appraisals. • Blue’s radical way of thinking may challenge the other workers’ thinking systems. • Blue thinking is digital (figures and numbers) while Purple thinking is analogue or happens in pictures — translation is needed to understand each other.
<p>Support to children</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learnerships for cleaners’ children. • In-house training. • Provide jobs for the empowerment of the children. • Support pre-school accommodation and education.

General

- Invest in infrastructure, technology, equipment, and resources to improve productivity and job conditions to retain good cleaners.
- Investments in infrastructure should be linked to better employment, higher wages, better working conditions and economic opportunities.
- Transform unstable, low-paid jobs (like temporary jobs) into more stable work structures with higher earnings.
- Efforts should include transitioning from the informal to formal sectors.
- Increase public awareness of the importance of cleaners and cleaning services through multimedia.
- Increase awareness and benefits of training and skills building amongst low-paid workers.
- Add benefits to all contract cleaners’ wages, such as medical aid, unemployment insurance, sick leave, annual salary increases, and annual leave.
- Sponsor cleaners’ transport to work – cleaners use half their salaries travelling to work.
- Focus on cleaner health and well-being.
- Adjust the appointment conditions of temps. The company has many temps with month-to-month contracts. They have no provident fund, benefits, or bonuses.
- Workers should receive feedback on concerns that are reported confidentially.
- Complainants must be allowed to suggest solutions and be part of the solution.
- Regular staff surveys should collect workers’ views to help the company identify problems.
- Open and fair recruitment practices include internal and external or site advertising to ensure a wide range of applications for vacancies.
- Processes should be fair and transparent.
- Bullying and harassment must be prevented.

Different learnerships in the organisation were not added to the framework as they will be part of the contract cleaning company's internal arrangements after selecting cleaners to participate in the upliftment pilot project. Accordingly, the ROI would only be measured and reported after completing the pilot project over time. The list of recommendations for uplifting the working poor was drawn from all data sources and were not cited separately.

The most urgent recommendations for the government to uplift the African female poor are also attached to the framework. Moreover, President Ramaphosa has stressed the upliftment of African females in several of his public speeches. Although the list of government obligations will not form part of the company's pilot project, the expectations are that the calls for political and state intervention will be realised and delivered soon.

In Table 5.3, a competency-building framework for the government is proposed.

Table 5.3 Competency-building framework: Government

Government obligations	
<p>Appeals for addressing the African female working poor conditions and upliftment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide quality learning and education opportunities to previously disadvantaged African women. • Provide learning opportunities and bursaries for their children. • Subsidise low-paid workers’ transport to their worksite and back. • Provide academic certificate holders access to internships. • Provide more and better-quality job opportunities. • Provide free child transport to school. • Provide free transport in villages. • Keep children in education longer. • Provide life-long learning. • Accelerate female education and income opportunities to cultivate empowerment (offering life skills, addressing social norms around gender, and eradicating girl pregnancies).
<p>Appeals to business and government for supporting the African female working poor upliftment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend to labour market skills and competencies for particular jobs with the prospect of a decent job or entrepreneurship afterwards. • Induce effective labour market policies and life-long learning to increase workers’ opportunities for better-paid and quality jobs. • Businesses and the government must stop supporting unethical labour practices in South Africa. The consequences of not acting against unjust and unethical outsourced companies are vast and lead to the continuation of inequality and an imbalanced society.

<p>Government obligations towards the African female and working poor upliftment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy proposals must address female inequalities for a more equal and fair working society and resilient economy. • Policy directives must promote economic growth and infrastructure development within the informal sector. • Increase awareness and enforce labour regulations that protect low-skilled, low-waged, and elementary labourers. • Create awareness of investments in infrastructure and rapid infrastructure development that led to direct and indirect jobs, better employment, higher wages, enhanced working conditions, and economic opportunities. • All outsourcing companies should add benefits to contract cleaners’ wages, such as medical aid, unemployment insurance, sick leave, annual salary raises, and annual leave. • Policies must create opportunities to uplift the marginalised African female population through improved education, health, and transportation.
<p>Financial services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial services, information and legal advice should be offered. • Regulations must be streamlined to unlock the potential of entrepreneurs and new markets. • Actively confront fraud and corruption.
<p>Adverse life events</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand that a lower sense of coherence is linked to adverse life events, abuse, and alcohol misuse, aggravating and perpetuating poverty. It must be a priority for government policy action. • Policymakers should deliver programmes to improve coping mechanisms and promote problem-solving behaviours. • Large amounts of alcohol consumption amongst the poor constrain a permanent escape from poverty and vulnerability and should be addressed through job creation, social work, recreation, and advice. • Poor households need social and psychological assistance to help them resist impoverishment from numerous vulnerabilities and risks.

Health and development

- Provide cost-effective interventions, such as family planning programmes and clinics in urban and rural areas to support the poor.
- Essential requirements for health and development in the emancipation of the African female and her children are
 - Source of drinking water.
 - Hygiene and sanitation.
 - Type of waste disposal.
 - Type of housing, which includes building materials for shelter.
 - Kind of energy used for cooking and lighting.
 - Nutrition according to expected household-level food security.
 - Crime protection.
 - Health (accessibility to the nearest health centre).
 - Access to information (radio, television, and internet).
 - Child development (exposure to early childhood education before primary school).
 - Education (distance from school, school attendance, school-age to grade fitness, and other school facilities).
- Health and school facilities require substantial upgrading.
- Financing the social services grant sector remains high on the list until South Africa reaches the growth and upliftment of all its citizens.

Table 5.3 contains a collection of proposals to the government containing appeals to address the conditions of the African female working poor and their upliftment. Although the list was compiled from the research findings and a plea for government to attend to these requests, the outcomes will not form part of the company's pilot project and delivery.

With the guidance of her supervisor, it was the researcher's wish to submit the thesis without fully describing Table 5.1, Table 5.2 and Table 5.3. Her condition had deteriorated seriously, and she wanted to submit her own work. They discussed the risks of not fully describing the tables below their placement. However, they hoped that enough was done – and to keep the integrity of Jacqui's own work.

5.8 CONCLUSION

The analytical narrative focused on the African female working poor in the South African contract cleaning industry, their inadequate education, limited skills and ambition and subsequent application for a cleaning job due to no other work opportunities in the labour market. Poverty was singled out as the cause and product of inequality that forces women into low-wage jobs, dependency on social grants, and little opportunity to escape the intergenerational poverty cycle. Typically, poverty impacts negatively on education and training, skills development and stands in the way of the upliftment and emancipation of the African female. Findings were unequivocal that African female rights for education, social inclusivity and upliftment must be promoted. Women empowerment could be offered through education and learnerships and decent employment and earnings to improve their life and work conditions.

Consequently, the new theory and analytical narrative focused on actions and interventions for training, competency building, advancement, and the upliftment of the African female working poor in the contract cleaning industry in South Africa. Contract cleaning companies are engines of economic growth and have a significant role in determining whether growth is inclusive and contributes to poverty reduction. Therefore, these companies should create opportunities for the cleaners to build competencies through learnerships and training. Because the research was performed at a South African contract cleaning company in Sandton, a competency-building framework was proposed as the research outcome and application. The framework will be modified to fit the requirements of a pilot project with a group of low-wage contract cleaners in the company.

Chapter 6 will present the conclusion to the research where the research aim and sub-questions will be compared with the findings to assess the trustworthiness and rigour of the study.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mineworker can become the head of the mine, that a child of farmworkers can become the president of a great nation. It is what we make out of what we have, not what we are given, that separates one person from another — Nelson Mandela, 1995:30.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter debates the research problem, aim, and objectives in the same sequence in which they were discussed throughout the thesis. The purpose is to establish whether all objectives were addressed and resolved effectively. In addition, the chapter will provide a summary of the research findings for a conclusion on the research topic. It will be followed by a brief of the study's contributions, and finally, the limitations of the research will be reviewed for future research recommendations.

Observations and experience in the contract cleaning environment and a lack of literature on the African female working poor and their upliftment in the South African cleaning industry raised the workplace problem.

Elevated levels of unemployment and the low level of education skills required for most contract cleaning jobs enable employers to recruit new employees effortlessly, thereby actively negating the need for skills development for upliftment and impeding the ability of the African female working poor in this sector to break the poverty cycle.

As general manager of business transformation and optimisation in the South African contract cleaning company, a relativist-subjectivist approach to research the working poor cleaner problem in the contract cleaning company, was adapted. A belief was held that human thoughts and actions cannot be separated from their past experiences and that peoples' knowledge and thinking correlate with their beliefs, culture, and education. Therefore, there is no single truth regarding a phenomenon. It became apparent that the African female working poor cleaners needed education and competency building for upliftment, better wages, and breaking the poverty cycle. However, it was still not clear how that could be done. Therefore, the main research question entailed

What competency-building framework can be derived for the upliftment of the African female working poor contract cleaners in South Africa?

This research question could only be resolved by applying an interpretivist-constructivist epistemological approach to first accomplish smaller objectives, namely:

- i. Investigate the actual life and work conditions of the African female working poor contract cleaners in South Africa.
- ii. Explore the learning and career ambitions of the African female working poor contract cleaners in South Africa.
- iii. Critically interrogate theoretical concepts and constructs relating to the poor and working poor in South Africa
- iv. Obtain practical insights about the needs and upliftment of the African female working poor contract cleaners in South Africa.
- v. Derive a competency-building framework to enable the upliftment of the African female working poor contract cleaners in South Africa.

A constructivist grounded theory lodging a critical inquiry into the research phenomenon was performed to focus on the working poor and their upliftment in the South African contract cleaning industry. Therefore, the contributions of 22 cleaners and participants of two company focus group discussions were concurrently collected, analysed and theorised over eight months. The data analysis comprised open and axial coding, where data were coded into categories and sub-categories and further compared and clustered into three sub-ordinated categories or themes to develop a new theory on the upliftment of the working poor.

The primary research was followed by a literature review introducing three theories related to the research phenomenon. First, Spiral Dynamics provided an insight into value systems or human niches and people's thinking systems at different stages of their life and psychological development. The spiral represents the possibility of development and change and people moving beyond their current situation and problem-solving level into a more complicated way of thinking. Second, Karpman's Drama Triangle expounded on human behaviour, the roles people take on in dealing with their dramas, and how behavioural change can be employed to ensure the improvement in managing problems and arguments. Lastly, scholarly contributions on personal authority, self-confidence, emotional intelligence, and resilience were reviewed to create an understanding of theoretical concepts on the poor, working poor, redress, and interventions for upliftment and emancipation of the African female.

Finally, the primary and literature findings were triangulated and combined to develop a new theory or analytical narrative on African female education and learning, poverty as causality and product of inequality, and actions and interventions for upliftment. The analytical narrative served to derive a competency-building framework as an outcome of the research and a proposal for the upliftment of the African female working poor in the contract cleaning business.

6.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

African females have shown to be an invaluable labour force in the contract cleaning industry which outsources its cleaning and hygiene services to client organisations. However, although bargaining councils annually negotiate cleaners' minimum hourly wages, which is higher than the general South African minimum wage, low wages keep contract cleaners trapped in a cycle of poverty. Reasons for earning such low salaries were found to include inadequate education, lack of skills, and little opportunity for gaining competencies for upliftment and a decent living. The consequences are cultural exclusion, renunciation of the chance for personal, economic,

and social development, and reduced corporate and government participation and decision making for the African female working poor. Denial of civil and political rights and economic drawbacks drive African females' humiliation and poverty unless help materialises through personal, business, and government interventions for their upliftment and emancipation.

Moreover, since the beginning of 2020, the global COVID-19 pandemic has intensified the impact of poverty. It aggravated women and child abuse, conflict, looting, and debt, which further slowed down and reversed job creation and poverty reduction. Due to the lack of scholarly research on African female contract cleaners and working poverty, it was deemed necessary to research cleaners' perceptions on growing up, causal circumstances for not gaining a decent education and skills, work and home conditions, their financial circumstances, and their ambitions. The findings could help to understand their life and work conditions with the goal to develop training and learnership programmes towards their upliftment. A brief discussion of each objective and research findings already discussed throughout the thesis follows below.

6.2.1 Actual life and work conditions of the African female working poor contract cleaners in South Africa

The findings indicated that the African female working poor cleaners were born into a cycle of poverty inherited from their modestly educated or uneducated parents and grandparents. They grew up in large households in survival conditions with little hope or opportunity to elevate their thinking and to acquire proper skills and a decent job. Another contributing factor is that they had no role model to direct them. With most fathers absent, they lived in childhood and household poverty. In addition, early pregnancies worsened their life circumstances as they were left workless and in need of a job to care for their families.

Poverty and malnutrition during the early years tend to impact human development, mental, social, and health conditions seriously and permanently. It became apparent when three cleaners depicted themselves and some of their children as "slow". Hence, several African females enter the contract cleaning services with educational, personal, and poverty impediments that inhibit their thinking, performance, and learning and with a thinking system that has never been challenged. Others may find strenuous work harder due to poverty handicaps. These facts were to be considered when assessing cleaners for their skill and willingness to participate in upliftment programmes.

The findings indicated that many cleaners would shy away from training if it were introduced from a managerial and systematic corporate thinking level. In this case, they might remain on a low-wage level due to not showing adequate initiative, self-confidence, and the resilience to cope with learnerships and competency building programmes. In many cases, a cleaning job might serve as a comfort zone not to exert unfamiliar problems and new ways of thinking on top of their daily chores and problems. These cleaners would need the motivation to elevate their thinking before being prepared and ready for training. Moreover, the research indicated that most unskilled workers are biased towards rapid and regular change, have an analogue mindset and learn easier by relation and imitating others. They would rather copy other people and trainers who show them how to do a task instead of following a systematic digital mindset of relentless progress and change. Accordingly, they should be allowed to learn at a pace they can manage. These facts support the argument that there will be cleaners who would not want to learn because of a low thinking system, no self-confidence, and home circumstances that prevent them from competency building. Furthermore, there would always be those cleaners

who are unable to learn and are comfortable staying a cleaner “just using a mop.” Nevertheless, companies will forever need ordinary cleaners when the progressors advance to better and more lucrative positions.

The research findings contributed to the understanding of where these women came from and what their circumstances were for not obtaining a decent education. Therefore, the first research objective was reached namely, investigating and finding a resolve for the actual life and work conditions of the African female working poor contract cleaners in South Africa. Poor growing up and education circumstances influenced their potential life conditions and job opportunities and should thus be considered in competency training and upliftment strategies.

6.2.2 Learning and career ambitions of the African female working poor contract cleaners in South Africa

The workers’ dream jobs and aspirations were far from staying ordinary cleaners because of a need for a higher salary and better life and work conditions. They desired to be treated with dignity and respect by the community and people in the company’s client organisations. Moreover, some cleaners still needed to care for a boyfriend or husband apart from caring for their children and extended families. Subsequently, they all aspired towards better education and lucrative jobs to escape the poverty cycle and would do anything to ensure a better future for their children. Typically, these women’s aspirations were limited to becoming administrative clerks, nurses, receptionists, and police officers with little ambition of being trained to become something else. It is construed that poverty, limited ambition, and low thinking dulled their insight and knowledge to become more.

Typically, most cleaners’ perceptions were that Cleaning and Hygiene is not a professional job to retain over an extended period due to low wages, undignified work conditions, and low community status. Therefore, they entered the cleaning industry with little ambition and knowledge about building their competencies in the cleaning company for progress and upliftment. The sense is that the contract cleaning industry should improve its status and the perceptions and self-esteem of its workers by promulgating Cleaning and Hygiene as a professional career with ample growth opportunities. Competency training and career planning and development should be part of contract cleaning industry’s obligation to improve workers’ life and work circumstances and eradicate poverty amongst the African female working poor.

Research findings indicated that poverty and mere survival cause stress, humiliation and fewer opportunities for women with inadequate education, skills, and a lower thinking system. Therefore, cleaners need information and communication mechanisms to notify them about upliftment events in their work environment. Indications were clear that several cleaners were not aware of vacancies, training programmes and learnerships offered by the company. The inference was that head office information was not communicated to all workers at the client sites. Furthermore, findings showed that all cleaners did not have the skill to use emails or log into the company website for information about learnerships, and skills training. The younger cleaners were more adaptable to information technology than some older women with cell phones. However, all cleaners showed a need for coaching and finding information on the company’s website and online resources. The impression was that the use of technology should form part of any basic skills training to prepare cleaners for learnerships and competency building. In addition, basic training would grow the cleaners’ self-confidence with support and motivation from management.

Thus, the second research objective was reached by concluding on the learning and career ambitions of the working poor. They grew up, completed their education, and entered the cleaning company with little ambition and self-confidence but hoping to receive a better salary to improve their lives. The resolution is that although cleaners were not aware of the fact, they could always build their competencies for advancement and better-paid jobs in the contract cleaning company structure, community, and labour force.

6.2.3 Theoretical concepts and constructs relating to the poor and working poor in South Africa

A literature review was conducted on theoretical constructs about the poor and working poor in South Africa, which afterwards, was triangulated with findings from the constructivist grounded theory. The findings confirmed that the low level of education and skills of the unprivileged and working poor create stigma, low self-esteem, and a barrier to dignified and well-paid jobs. Typically, mechanisms for the upliftment from poverty focused on material lack and other resources and creating more of it for better life and work conditions. However, findings were that social seclusion and shame inherently manifest poverty and undermine human dignity and respect. The interpretation is that creating human dignity is essential for building personal authority and resilience. Once acquired, a person may be readily available to develop her learning and competencies towards upliftment.

Furthermore, the inference is that state intervention through welfare grants mitigates women's household poverty to a degree and, to a lesser degree, eases the inequality, humiliation, and subjective well-being of the South African female working poor cleaners. However, it is not sufficient to free them from poverty and help them gain skills for better-paid jobs. Poverty-stricken female households survive on social grant income but are still negatively affected by the intergenerational transmission of poverty and abuse. The extrapolation is that dependency on social welfare does not confront the totality of material, educational, and socio-psychological deprivation. Therefore, the contract cleaning industry could serve African females' rights, dignity, access to applicable skills, and job enhancement by uplifting them from their current circumstances and offering them a better future.

The study stated earlier that nothing is as expensive as being poor. The research findings provided evidence that some cleaners spend up to half their salaries on transport to the work site and back home, depending on where they live. Unswervingly, temporary workers receive meagre monthly payments due to working only a few hours per week or month. However, they still apply for cleaning jobs, spending their income on transport just having a job. These women survive on little income because they exist within a circle of family and close friends where everybody shares everything. Even though, civilisation and a collective obligation require the community, business, and government uplifting these people towards a better life.

The third research objective was met by reviewing theories on thinking systems using Spiral Dynamics, behavioural change, and concepts on personal authority, emotional intelligence and self-belief. In addition, literature was consulted on the poor, working poor, and poverty relief and eradication mechanisms. Findings from the literature review were triangulated with the findings from the primary research to reach a mutual understanding on the working poor and mechanism and interventions for upliftment. Triangulation of the different data sources ensured the rigour and trustworthiness of the research.

6.2.4 Practical insights about the needs and upliftment of the African female working poor contract cleaners in South Africa

Broader research insights were extracted from the research findings and discussed in section 5.6. of this thesis. Therefore, this section will focus on the fourth research objective, namely, to uncover practical insights on the needs and upliftment of the African female working poor contract cleaners. Two of the most frequently appearing themes and research insights boiled down to women's education, learning, and poverty as causality and product of inequality. Inadequate education and skills development, poor living conditions and reduced work opportunities created a need for education and competency building. However, poverty as causality and product of inequality posed a challenge in obtaining education and training for a better job and life conditions. As a result, women entered the contract cleaning industry in despair and with little hope of upliftment due to low salaries and adverse financial circumstances. A more dignified job required better skills for which they needed to be trained.

It became apparent that upliftment embraces the elevation or advancement of a cleaner through inspiration and encouragement to train towards a better position. Self-motivation serves as a source of empowerment, resilience, and determination when rejection or depression pulls one down. Hence, interventions for upliftment support a woman's personal, financial and social circumstances through relevant training programmes, competency building, and career development. Part of the upliftment process is offering promotions, awards, and permitting workers options, alternatives, and choices in their workplace.

Competencies were clarified as the ability and drive to do well in a specific job. Therefore, workers would perform particular tasks or skills at a required target level to demonstrate their competency. Moreover, the research found that company managers desire particular qualities from employees to complete their tasks effectively before promoting them in their careers. For example, essential competencies in the contract cleaning environment would include communication, teamwork, leadership, problem-solving on a more complex level, attentiveness, and readiness to learn and being trained. In addition, cleaners need motivation and encouragement from supervisors and managers to apply for learnerships and training programmes and to acquire relevant competencies for upliftment.

The inference is that skills and competencies are closely entwined and interpreted as the talent or proficiency to do their job or task efficiently and according to expectation. Moreover, skills are obtained through training, internships, learnerships, and further education for a promotion or better-paid job. The understanding is that skills are never lost but should constantly be enhanced and increased for employees to progress in their careers. Thus, different life and work skills are needed to help cleaners take responsibility for their upliftment and success in all aspects of life. Decent quality and applicable skills safeguard confidence and independence and are important for job achievement and advancement.

Insights are that women receive empowerment when they take ownership and display efficiency and resilience for social, educational, economic, and psychological development. Furthermore, female emancipation indicates being set free from social, political and controlling influences, such as traditional values or beliefs, to obtain equality, especially for marginalised women. Therefore, emancipated and skilled women are set for success, enforce inspiration and respect in their home, work and community life, and serve as role models for their sons, daughters, and colleagues.

Finally, the overarching theme that developed from the grounded theory was that cleaners need the business and government to activate and sustain their upliftment and development through interventions, such as training, learnership, and competency building programmes. Indications from the expert focus group discussions were that the company was preparing

interventions for addressing working poverty and would initialise an upliftment pilot project with a group of low-wage contract cleaners as soon as a competency-building framework was ready. Therefore, the insights and conclusions contributed to finalising the final research objective to determine whether the research aim was accomplished as a whole.

6.2.5 Deriving a competency-building framework for enabling the upliftment of the African female working poor contract cleaners in South Africa

This study delivered a competency-building framework as the aim and outcome of the research. The anticipation is that it would serve the contract cleaning company as an application tool in its attempt to solve the female working poor phenomenon by uplifting cleaners through training and competency building programmes. The competency-building framework presents a list of conditions and actions tabled in section 5.7 of this thesis.

The idea is to use the framework in a competency building pilot project with a group of about twenty or more low-wage African female contract cleaners in the company. The identified and willing working poor female cleaners would first undergo basic training to prepare them for learnerships and further competency building and training programmes. Because the framework serves as a dynamic tool, it will be adapted and improved throughout the planning and implementation phases of the pilot project to ensure success and a positive return on investment.

Accordingly, the research aim and objectives have been determined by submitting a competency-building framework as a proposal and application for a pilot project in the company.

6.3 CONCLUSIONS

The observed phenomenon was that elevated levels of unemployment and the low level of education skills required for most contract cleaning jobs enable employers to recruit new employees effortlessly, thereby actively negating the need for skills development for upliftment and impeding the ability of the African female working poor in this sector to break the poverty cycle. Therefore, the intention was to use a constructivist grounded theory to research the upliftment of the working poor in the contract cleaning industry in South Africa to derive a competency framework for their upliftment.

In addition, the study filled a gap in knowledge about the needs and upliftment of the African female working poor in the contract cleaning industry in South Africa. It became evident that most cleaners' lives followed a similar pattern of child poverty within a large household headed by low or uneducated parents, primarily mothers and grandmothers, inadequate education, and disparity that forced them to become cleaners out of desperation. Therefore, cleaners did not view cleaning as a profession and aspired towards a more dignified and better-paid job. They perceived a cleaning job as temporary and wanted to study or find another job but did not have the skills or finances to obtain additional competencies for upliftment. Furthermore, most cleaners were unaware of training and learnerships in the company.

Accordingly, competency building and economic empowerment have been linked to accepting personal authority, self-worth, and equal participation in the workplace and community. By strengthening women's economic role, poverty could be reduced and feasibly eradicated, health and education outcomes could be increased, and broader development goals could be

met. The research findings indicated that social handouts for the sustainable living of the working poor would not work. Therefore, the only practical and applicable solutions to poverty are education and competency building to uplift women's financial status and economic, corporate and social participation. Upliftment in the work environment comprises career planning and development, higher salaries, more affordable transport, and work benefits offered to all workers as part of the compensation package.

Research findings support the argument that educating South Africa's women and girls is the key to converting the cyclical nature of poverty into a cycle of progress and success. Initiatives for developing the economic potential of cleaners include core business upliftment applications supported by government ventures. However, the sense is that corporates can no longer wait for the government to support the upliftment of the working poor. Corporates and the community need empowered women to serve as role models and mentors in their communities. Moreover, emancipated women are more likely to safeguard their daughter's equal education and professional employment rights. Cleaners' children have the right to a better life.

Furthermore, it was found that the contract cleaning industry would enhance its status by adopting a wide-ranging approach involving communities and professional bodies to promote its professionalism and learning programmes once these are in place. The inference is that cleaner upliftment and empowerment could become equivalent to excellence and performance in the corporate and outside world. Hence, the conclusion is that a competency-building framework is essential for personal, business and government engagement in the upliftment of the African female working poor. It also became clear that upliftment is an evolving and dynamic endeavour that all parties should take ownership of.

Research findings shaped the competency-building framework that contains basic and dynamic skills needed to uplift cleaners' thinking about themselves, training, and career planning and development. The framework as outcome of the research includes obligations and proposals for employee upliftment once the research site implements an upliftment pilot project. Competencies are not fixed, and the framework will change as requirements and activities change. Therefore, it is presented as a dynamic work tool and research output for application.

The framework would not be inclusive had government actions for the upliftment of the African female working poor not been added with the belief that the emancipation of women should urgently be addressed. Research findings indicated that government policies and programmes should transfer tangible resources and upkeep across all age groups and generations within families serving as a source of mutual aid for building a civil and caring society. Furthermore, government strategies embody actions according to the social compact advocated by the South African president, where mutual ties hold families, governance, and society together.

The lives of 22 women who shared their stories of despair and poverty might have been different if they had continued their school education and corporate learnership training. Similarly, circumstances might have differed had they received financial support and informed coaching earlier in their childhood development. However, hope is not lost. The contract cleaning company is on its way to piloting a project to uplift and transform its working poor into professional, emancipated and successful women through learning and competency building. The inference is that investment in the upliftment of the working poor will become hard to avoid

in the corporate and government sphere in South Africa in future. Every seed sown confirms the future and an escape from the cycle of poverty for African women.

In conclusion, the research problem, aim and objectives were addressed successfully by deriving a competency-building framework for the upliftment of the working poor in the contract cleaning industry in South Africa.

The thesis was completed with the Da Vinci Institute for Technology Management, a Mode 2 higher education institution. Da Vinci requires interdisciplinary research and systems thinking to resolve practical issues in the work environment. Consequently, the competency-building framework provides evidence of the constructivist grounded theory research findings for application in the contract cleaning business. Furthermore, the return on investment (ROI) of uplifting a group of working poor cleaners will be evident after completing the pilot project.

6.4 SUMMARY OF CONTRIBUTIONS

The research findings have consequences for the African female working poor in the contract cleaning industry in South Africa and the company in particular. The company recognised its obligation to develop its low-wage cleaners stuck in low wages and poverty due to inadequate education and a lack of skills. The competency-building framework will benefit the company and its cleaners by supporting its business transformation and optimisation strategy, status, and stability. Moreover, the research output and findings may be extended to other companies with the obligation to uplift their working poor. Moreover, as a gap was realised in the research about competency building and upliftment of working poor cleaners, the thesis may inform researchers and businesses globally. Research findings made it clear that working poverty and the invisibility of cleaners in their work environment are a global concern.

The competency-building framework as research output is the first step towards a transformation strategy for African females in the contract cleaning business in South Africa. It contributes to developing cleaners' perceptions of themselves, their work environment and cleaning and hygiene as a profession. Additionally, worker perceptions influence their job performance and general conduct. Specific implications for the company are that cleaners need learning and upliftment programmes to fit their thinking systems. Inferences are that the working poor need a gradual introduction to training and learnerships based on their thinking and learning, which encompasses imitating people.

Technically, the study informs the company of the workers' needs and expectations. The company's business transformation and optimisation strategy would include training all cleaners on using computers and cell phones to communicate and access company information. Furthermore, the company would benefit by broadcasting information via its website and technology to workers at the head office and sites. The inference is that success requires the application of a well-developed competency-building framework and training and learnership programmes that are broadcast to stakeholders within and outside the business.

The study's contribution to the community will be to empower African women to participate and offer valuable input on corporate, community and social issues. However, it was found that status is obtained through growth, enlightened thinking, and self-esteem. Furthermore, the contract cleaning industry and its workers' reputation and status would expand if information on upliftment programmes and Cleaning and Hygiene as a profession could enlighten the

community. Cleaners currently shy away from telling people where they work because cleaning is demeaning.

The importance and validity of the research output is a competency-building framework that will be presented to the company management as an application in its upliftment strategy for the African female working poor in the company. Working poverty would not disappear overnight as there would always be desperate, inadequately educated females applying for cleaning jobs. Women with Grade 12 and higher would still enter the cleaning industry due to a lack of internships or other job opportunities. However, the company would be better prepared to grow and emancipate cleaners for promotion and job opportunities. Although there would always be ordinary cleaners, these women could be encouraged to better their skills through basic training units proposed in the competency-building framework.

As the government is obliged to drive South Africa's upliftment process through better education, salaries, decent job creation, and ensuring learner internships, the competency-building framework also recommends upliftment applications for acting. Thus, the research output resolved the research problem, aim, and objectives by delivering a competency-building framework for real-world application. The first step in applying the findings and competency-building framework will be a pilot project initiated by the general manager responsible for business transformation and optimisation. On successful completion of the long-term project, it could be expanded to other businesses.

Finally, the thesis contributes new knowledge to the theory and existing body of knowledge on poverty and working poverty, positive psychology, upliftment, and economic, social, and environmental sustainability. Another benefit to the company is that cleaners should feel obliged to take ownership of their development and upliftment in the company. The company's ROI will be long-term as it would only realise after the pilot study and on successful evidence of benefits to the cleaners, the company, and its investors.

6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In conclusion, a critical reflection on the research uncovered some limitations or weaknesses that may have affected the research. However, these limitations present an avenue for growth and directions for future research. This discussion will highlight three limitations with their possible impact and recommendations for future research.

The first issue concerns formulating the research problem assuming that all African females entering the contract cleaning services were inadequately educated and lowly skilled. During the research, it became clear that three of the 22 cleaners had completed their education but not their internships due to no jobs in their study field and financial circumstances forcing them to take any job. It may have influenced the interpretation of the findings differently. Future research recommends repeating a longitudinal study but separating ordinary cleaners from those with a higher education to explore differences in their thinking systems and career development.

Another potential weakness was using a focus group of five career progressors to compare and confirm the findings from the 22 personal in-depth interviews. During the COVID-19 lockdown in South Africa, a face-to-face focus group meeting on a weekday afternoon was found the most appropriate way to collect data as most employees were inaccessible and unavailable. Although two of the five career progressors confirmed the question statements in

great detail during the focus group discussion, the inference is that more valuable data could have been collected through personal in-depth interviews. Thus, a proposal for future research in a similar study is to collect data from career progressors through personal in-depth interviews rather than a focus group discussion.

The last and final limitation with a possible impact on the research was the cross-sectional study of 22 cleaners purposefully selected from about 6 000 low-wage cleaners in the company database. As cleaners work at different company subsidiaries, collecting data from low-wage contract cleaners on sites closer to the company's Head Office seemed feasible. Unfortunately, COVID-19 and time restrictions limited the simultaneous collection and analysis of data from company sites across South Africa. Nevertheless, it may have impacted the comprehensiveness of the competency-building framework. A future research recommendation is that a longitudinal study is performed by including a selection of low-paid cleaners across South African registered contract cleaning environments.

The concluding remarks are that information in this thesis rests on facts collected through a constructivist grounded theory as primary research, a literature review, and information from company documents and experts. The research aim and outcome derived a competency-building framework as a proposal for the upliftment of the African female working poor contract cleaners in South Africa. Once the thesis has been submitted to Da Vinci Institute for Technology Management and ratified for a doctorate, it will be presented to company management as an information and application document. After publication, facts will be available to other cleaning companies, the public, and researchers interested in the upliftment of the working poor. All personal records and information sources will be securely saved for five years, after which they will be destroyed.

At the end of my study, I believe that the cleaner women shared their stories not only to reveal what life has apportioned them and how they adapt to these life conditions; but to construe how poverty controls one's well-being, survival, and dignity. The pandemic has irreversibly changed all facets of our lives. Furthermore, the agility of our development plans is now more critical than ever. There can be nothing as strong as a woman who has realised upliftment and rebuilt her life. For all who would share in an upliftment process, I want to repeat the words by Barry Bennett (2021):

*When you see a need, choose to "see" the provision for the need in the Spirit.
Rather than focusing on the problem, see healing, abundance, and victory!
What you see will activate you.*

Reflection

Although not planned initially, this study turned out to be an autoethnographic story involving self-reflection in which I described and analysed my personal experiences to understand the cultural experiences in my workplace.

It touched me deeply when I realised how my personal experiences influenced the research process and connected the autoethnographic story to wider cultural, political, business, and social meanings and understandings.

I am grateful that I could interweave my own lived his(her)story with the stories of so many underprivileged African female cleaners who never stood a chance of being uplifted without telling the world and helping them through research.

Now, that I am at a turning point in my own life fighting cancer, the upliftment process will not stop. I am keenly aware that in the same way that words are now flowing away from me; the very being of the working poor females in this sector become unseen.

I remain hopeful that there can be a better outcome for these women and for me, through the Greatest Inventor.

NOTE OF SUPERVISOR: *Jacqui lost her fight to her disease a week after this reflection was written. It was her final wish that the framework, insights and recommendations of the thesis becomes a living legacy that will linger sustainably in the lives of the living poor and those who interact with them.*

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APPENDICES

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Appendix A: Employer Approval to Conduct Doctoral Research



5 October 2020

Mrs Jacqui Van Zyl

Dear Jacqui

APPROVAL TO CONDUCT DOCTORAL RESEARCH

With reference to your request to conduct your doctoral research within the Empact Group Pty Ltd Gauteng area, I hereby confirm approval.

The approval to access the Empact Group cleaner and related databases in order to invite participants to be included in interviews and focus group meetings concerning the upliftment of the working poor is duly granted.

You may conduct your research with cleaners across the Empact Group Gauteng workforce. We trust that your research will consider the required ethical and protection of personal information guidelines and that the privacy of the cleaners will be respected.

All the best with the completion of your studies.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alan Quinn'.

Alan Quinn
Chief Financial Officer

**Appendix B:
Invitation to a Personal Interview**

From: Mrs Jacqui van Zyl
Business Transformation & Optimisation
Telephone: 011 209 2400

Date:

Dear

Invitation to a personal interview concerning my studies.

I am busy with my doctoral studies at Da Vinci Institute of Technology under the supervision of Dr Rica Viljoen. I hope to obtain a better understanding of people who work and earn minimum wages. Because Supercare Cleaning services is such an important part of our company, I believe that interviewing you about your living and working conditions and what could be done to improve the general circumstances of cleaners can be of considerable value to my research.

The interview will take about one hour in which we will discuss five questions that I will put to you. There will be no right or wrong answers – only a discussion in which you can speak freely about your views. I will audio record our discussion to write down any interesting ideas for my research. Your name will never be mentioned, and under no circumstances will anybody know what we have discussed.

The data will not be used for any other purpose than for my research. All information is confidential and will be securely locked away until after the publication of my study – and then it will be destroyed.

You do not have to participate in the research or have an interview with me because participation is voluntary. You are free to withdraw from the research at any time without any negative or undesirable consequences to yourself or your job. There will be no financial or other benefits as a result of your participation.

I will be most grateful to you for participating in the interview and for your valuable time and input.

Yours sincerely

Please sign and return the form to me within two weeks if you are able and willing to participate in a personal interview. I will then contact you to make an appointment.

Signature:

Date:

Print Name:

**Appendix C:
Invitation to a Focus Group Meeting – Progressors**

From: Mrs Jacqui van Zyl
Business Transformation & Optimisation
Telephone: 011 209 2400

Date:

Dear

Invitation to a personal interview concerning my studies.

I am busy with my doctoral studies at Da Vinci Institute of Technology under the supervision of Dr Rica Viljoen. I hope to obtain a better understanding of people who work and earn minimum wages. Because Supercare Cleaning services is such an important part of our company, I believe that interviewing you about your living and working conditions and what could be done to improve the general circumstances of cleaners can be of considerable value to my research.

The interview will take about one hour in which we will discuss five questions that I will put to you. There will be no right or wrong answers – only a discussion in which you can speak freely about your views. I will audio record our discussion to write down any interesting ideas for my research. Your name will never be mentioned, and under no circumstances will anybody know what we have discussed.

The data will not be used for any other purpose than for my research. All information is confidential and will be securely locked away till after the publication of my study - and then it will be destroyed.

You do not have to participate in the research or have an interview with me because participation will be voluntary. You are free to withdraw from the research at any time without any negative or undesirable consequences to yourself or your job. There will be no financial or other benefits as a result of your participation.

I will be most grateful to you for participating in the interview and for your valuable time and input.

Yours sincerely

Please sign and return the form to me within two weeks if you are able and willing to participate in a personal interview. I will then contact you to make an appointment.

Signature:

Date:

Print Name:

**Appendix D:
Invitation to a Focus Group Discussion – Upliftment Advancers**

From: Mrs Jacqui van Zyl
Business Transformation & Optimisation
Telephone: 011 209 2400

Date:

Dear

Invitation to a personal interview concerning my studies.

I am busy with my doctoral studies at Da Vinci Institute of Technology under the supervision of Dr Rica Viljoen. I hope to obtain a better understanding of people who work and earn minimum wages. Because Supercare Cleaning services is such an important part of our company, I believe that interviewing you about your living and working conditions and what could be done to improve the general circumstances of cleaners can be of considerable value to my research.

The interview will take about one hour in which we will discuss five questions that I will put to you. There will be no right or wrong answers – only a discussion in which you can speak freely about your views. I will audio record our discussion to write down any interesting ideas for my research. Your name will never be mentioned, and under no circumstances will anybody know what we have discussed.

The data will not be used for any other purpose than for my research. All information is confidential and will be securely locked away till after the publication of my study - and then it will be destroyed.

You do not have to participate in the research or have an interview with me because participation will be voluntarily. You are free to withdraw from the research at any time without any negative or undesirable consequences to yourself or your job. There will be no financial or other benefits as a result of your participation.

I will be most grateful to you for participating in the interview and for your valuable time and input.

Yours sincerely

Please sign and return the form to me within two weeks if you are able and willing to participate in a personal interview. I will then contact you to make an appointment.

Signature:

Date:

Appendix E: Interview Guide

Thank you so much for your time. I really appreciate your willingness to help me with my studies.

The information I am gathering is only for my studies, and it would not be possible for me to change anything in your job and life as a result of this.

My hope though is that, because of the research that I am doing in the cleaning industry, that people will get a better understanding of the realities of the life of a cleaner.

I am going to ask you a few questions.

There are no right or wrong answers, and we are going to discuss each question. Your name will not appear anywhere on the form or in my research.

We can just have a friendly and relaxed discussion.

If any of the questions make you feel uncomfortable, or you do not want to answer a question, you do not have to answer it.

Q1. Your answers to the following questions will help me understand what your life was like when you grew up:	
1. Where did you grow up?	<i>Refer to Registration Form</i>
2. Who did you stay with?	<i>Refer to Registration Form</i>
3. When were you still growing up: What jobs did your parents do? What qualification did they have?	Mother:
	Father:
	Other:
4. How many children were you? Did all of you stay together at home?	<i>Refer to Registration Form</i>
5. How many people lived in the house where you grew up?	
6. What opportunities did you have to study or to complete qualifications?	
Field Notes:	

Q2. The next questions are about your education and learning during and after school:		
1. Where did you go to school?		Field Notes
2. What grade did you finish at school?		
3. Did you study anything after school?		
4. If you could do any job, what would that be?		
5. What would make it possible for you to do your ideal job?		
6. Do you know of any training that is given by your employer? Have you attended any training with the employer?		
7. Is there any training at your employer that you would like to attend?		
8. Are there any reasons why you could not or would not be able to go for the internal training?		
9. Do you think that a career in cleaning and hygiene can be a professional career?	<p><i>There are qualifications specifically developed for people who are cleaners. A person can complete the first qualification, Cleaning and Hygiene Certificate, and thereafter the next level, Specialisation qualification, and thereafter progress to Supervisory Qualification in Cleaning and Hygiene.</i></p> <p><i>Would these qualifications make it easier for you to consider it a professional career?</i></p>	

Q3. The next few questions will help me understand about your life at work:		
1. What job do you currently do at this employer?	<i>Refer to Registration Form</i>	
2. How long have you been working for this employer?	<i>Refer to Registration Form</i>	
3. Is this the only job that you are doing currently?		
4. How many hours do you usually work per month?	<i>Refer to Registration Form</i>	
5. What kind of jobs have you done before joining this company?	<i>Refer to Registration Form</i>	
6. What do you like and dislike about the job you are doing here?	Like:	Dislike:
7. If you could change something at work, what would that be? Why would you change this?		
8. If you could change anything with regards to your circumstances what would that be? Why would you change this?		
Field Notes:		

Q4. The next few questions are all about your life outside of work:		
1. Do you have a life partner?		Field Notes:
2. Does he/she work? If so, what does he/she do?		
3. Where do you live? In what kind of structure do you live? House, flat, shack?		
4. In total how many people are there in your household?		
5. Do you have children? How many? Are they living at home with you?		
6. What jobs do you think your children will be able to get one day?		
7. How many people do you look after – even if they do not live with you?		
8. Who would you consider to be your support structure?		
9. What are your dreams, hope and plans for your future?		
10. Is there anything you can do to improve your life to enjoy it more? If yes, how do you think it can be done?		

Q5. The next few questions are all about your financial situation:		
1. How many people are you supporting with your income? Who are they?		Field Notes:
2. Do you receive any other income like child support from [the father / SASSA] or other grants? If so, how much?		
3. Does any other person in your household receive any wage, pension or grant?		
4. How do you get to work every day and what does it cost?		
5. What is your take-home pay?		
6. What do you spend your money on in a month?		
7. Do you have enough money in a month to pay for the basics?		
8. Do you think there is anything you can do to earn more income?		

<p>Now that we have spent some time talking about you, how would you describe yourself: As an employee? As a person with a life outside of work?</p>		<p>Field Notes:</p>
<p>What do you like and value about yourself?</p>		
<p>What would you want to change about yourself that will help you to achieve your “ideal job”?</p>	<p><i>Refer to question 2.4</i></p>	
<p>What do you think your employer can do to assist you with getting to your “ideal job”?</p>		
<p>What do you think Government should do to assist you to get to your “ideal job”?</p>		

**Appendix F:
Personal In-depth Interview Notes**

F1. Summary of Participant's Details and Date of Interview

Date Interviewed	Name	Participant Number	Notes
13 March 2021	Makhoti	P1	
	Masenyoro	P2	
	Small	P3	
	Masarosa	P4	
10 April 2021	Mariah	P5	
	Lala	P6	
	Loveday	P7	
	Linda	P8	
	Naledi	P9	
	Queen	P10	
	Sibongile	P11	
13 May 2021	Irene	P12	
13 March 2021	DJ	P13	
	Lesedi	P14	
	Busi	P15	
17 April 2021	Mpho	P16	
	Lerato	P17	
	Makhanane	P18	
	Patience	P19	
	Rose	P20	
	Thandiwe	P21	
	Clody	P22	
12 February 2021	Eva		Pilot interview
12 February 2021	Cynthia		Pilot interview
Source: Own compilation.			

F2 Participants' Responses to Interview Questions

Participant 1: Makhoti (Interviewed 13 March 2021)	
<p>What was her life like when she grew up?</p> <p>Rural, women as head of household</p>	<p>Makhoti grew up in Thohoyandou in Limpopo.</p> <p>She lived with her mom and two sisters.</p> <p>Her mother (Grade 9) was selling clothes (self-employed), and her father (Grade 10) was a contractor building houses in Gauteng.</p> <p>Makhoti's granny, from her dad's side, also lived with them.</p> <p>Makhoti has the following qualifications: Paramedic / Firefighter / Call centre/ New venture qualifications. She also has a Code 10 drivers' licence.</p> <p>Makhoti's uncle (mother's brother) paid for her fees to study. Her uncle was a security guard, and he also paid for Makhoti's two sisters to study. Her two sisters do not work.</p> <p>Makhoti is the only one in her family who works, and she supports her mom and sisters with her salary.</p> <p>Makhoti's sisters have qualifications in Business Management and paramedics, but none is working.</p>
<p>Education and learning after school</p>	<p>Makhoti completed her Grade 12 at Thohoyandou Secondary School.</p> <p>Makhoti would love to do office administration. Her dream is to be a personal assistant.</p> <p>She will love to work office hours because she will have more time with her son.</p> <p>Makhoti wants to study part-time to get an office administration qualification. She did apply at a college for an office administration course, but she did not get any feedback.</p> <p>Makhoti did some courses at her current employer, for example, HSE, CFF, Chemicals.</p> <p>Makhoti did not get any certificate after attending courses at her current employer. She only signed a paper.</p> <p>She does not have a problem attending courses at work, and she does have access to training about her work.</p>

	<p>Makhoti does not think being a cleaner is a professional job. She feels that people are undermining them by walking on the wet floors they are busy cleaning, they treat them badly, and when they ask the people not to walk on the wet floors, they are being told that they must do their job as a cleaner.</p>
<p>Life at work</p>	<p>Makhoti has been a cleaner for five years. She sells Tupperware to earn an extra income but, because she does not have money to buy new stock, she loses clients, which is very painful for Makhoti. Makhoti works 133 hours per month, and she works from 07:00 to 19:00. The cleaner job was the first job she ever had. What she loves most about her job to communicate with people while she works and that people are trying to help her find a real/right job. Working in the cleaning profession is not a professional job. <i>When I am busy cleaning, then people they will go through there even though you will put a wet sign, even go there, no it is wet, and then some other people when you tell them it is wet, they will tell you, you are a cleaner, it is your job, do that job.</i> She does not like: <i>When people throw things down, even if they see a dust bin.</i> <i>When the people go inside the toilet and do not even flush and, if you ask them, then they will tell you it is your job.</i> The other thing that she does not like about her work is the long hours she must work because she has no time to help her son with his schoolwork or spend time with him. Makhoti will change the following at work as a cleaner: Tell the people not to walk on wet floors and pick up their waste and put it in the dustbin. She will tell people to respect cleaners because they help them clean and keep the places tidy. In addition, Makhoti will change the working hours: from 07:00 to 16:00 (Mon/Fri). Makhoti only gets home at 21:00 after a shift, and then it is too late to help her son with homework. She does not like to work on weekends because she wants to go to church. Makhoti would love to have more time with her son and study further.</p>

<p>Life outside work</p>	<p>Makhoti has a boyfriend. They have been together for three years, and he is working at Rocket Chemicals (a cleaning company). Makhoti does not live with her boyfriend. Makhoti and her son live in a 1 bedroom, brick building in Soweto. Makhoti's son is 8 years old. Her son is in Grade 3, and she said he is brilliant at school. Makhoti's boyfriend is not the father of her son. The father of her son left in 2016, and her son does not see him often; only occasionally he will see his son. Makhoti's son wants to be a doctor one day. She said she thinks her son can get any job better than a cleaner. The only income that Makhoti has is her salary as a cleaner and if she sells Tupperware. She takes care of herself and her son, her mother, her two sisters, and their 5 children with her salary. With her income, she must take care of 10 people. During the school holidays, her son visits her mom in Limpopo. When Makhoti is not at home, her friend who lives 2 km away from her looks after her son. Future dreams: <i>Oh, I want to work hard and then to get good pay, a nice big house so we can be able to stay together with my family, a car that I will be able to take my son to school and help some people when they need a car. Even the money that I can afford in life.</i> Makhoti does not have any other plans to earn an income.</p>
<p>Financial situation</p>	<p>Makhoti's son's father does not pay any maintenance. She does not get any SASSA grant for her son. Makhoti's mom is 56 years old, and she does not get any SASSA grant. Makhoti's two sisters get SASSA grants for five (5) children. Makhoti's sisters' SASSA grants = ZAR 2 100. Makhoti sends ZAR 1 000 pm home to her mom to support her sisters and children. Makhoti's salary: ZAR 3 700 Makhoti's expenses: Transport = ZAR 1 000, Rent = ZAR 800, Mom, sisters and children = ZAR 1 000, ZAR 900 for herself, which she uses to pay school fees for her son = ZAR 450, and ZAR 250 for his transport. Makhoti is then left with ZAR 200. Makhoti says her boyfriend must buy them food because there is no money left.</p>

Ambitions	Feels hopeless. Work so hard but have no money. <i>I struggle, so I cannot say I have got something because my money is small. I have got to ... because some of the things are needed because if now the schools are open the children all go to school, they need uniforms, money for transport, books and whatever, so I cannot say I have got something.</i> <i>Six kids between three women.</i> She wants to give a better future to her son and her family. <i>"I am tired."</i>
Notes:	

Participant 2: Masenyoro (Interviewed 13 March 2021)

<p>What was her life like when she grew up?</p>	<p>Masenyoro grew up in a small village, 1 hour drive from Johannesburg. I lived with my parents. When both her parents passed away in the same year, she moved to her granny's home. Nine people were staying at her granny's home. Her granny did not work, and the only income was her granny's SASSA grant. She stayed with her two grannies, her grandmother's two children, and four cousins. Both grandmothers received SASSA grants, the only income for nine people.</p>
<p>Education and learning after school</p>	<p>Masenyoro passed Grade 12 at a Technical School. Masenyoro did not study after school because there was no money. The only qualification she has is a Basic Cleaner Qualification – Level 1 Masenyoro does not know of any training with her current employer. She will be able to attend training if her employer offers it. She did not attend any training at her current employer.</p>
<p>Life at work</p>	<p>Masenyoro has been working as a cleaner at a hospital since March 2019. It is her only job; she has no other income. Masenyoro has a Level 1 basic cleaner qualification. Masenyoro thinks that being a cleaner is a professional job because she is currently doing this. However, she is not proud to be a cleaner, and she is cleaner because she does not have another choice. Masenyoro did not plan to be a cleaner, but she did it to earn money. Masenyoro was a cleaner at Squeaky Clean, Rivonia. What she like about her job: There are no difficulties with cleaning. Cleaning jobs help her to be clean as well. Previously, she did not like to clean at home, but she likes to clean at home since she is a cleaner. She will tell younger people to uplift themselves and not stay cleaners forever. Masenyoro said she would love to save money to do short courses to uplift herself. However, she will have to do part-time studies because she must work to earn an income. Masenyoro said she did not choose this job; she must earn an income. Masenyoro's dream job is to be a Quality Controller. She likes to control and supervise people. Masenyoro previously worked at Famous Brands as a quality controller. (She worked with her husband at</p>

	<p>Famous Brands.) While at home, she and her husband argued, and she stabbed him with a knife in self-defence. Her husband reported the case to Famous Brands, and Masenyoro was forced to resign or be demoted to a cleaner. She then resigned in 2016.</p> <p>She has experience as a quality controller but does not have a certificate.</p> <p>Masenyoro said her site manager inspired her. Her site manager was a waitress, and she is now a site manager. She tries to learn from her site manager to better herself. Her site manager is a role model to her, and she also wants to better herself to get another job to give a better future to her children.</p>
<p>Life outside work</p>	<p>Masenyoro does not have a boyfriend. She has three kids, aged 10, 5 and 3 years old. She is divorced from their father, and he does not contribute financially, and is not involved in children's lives.</p> <p>She lives in Alexandra, where she rents a room. She stays alone, and her kitchen is in her room. She shares a bathroom outside with the rest of the people renting.</p> <p>Her kids are staying with her grandmother who raised her.</p> <p>I am not sure what jobs my kids will do one day. The youngest one likes to read, the 5-year-old likes to play with guns and soldiers (maybe a police officer), and the 10-year old is quiet, always angry, and wants to be alone. Masenyoro has no idea what job he would do.</p> <p>Support structure = Her uncle and aunt help her to support the kids.</p> <p>Masenyoro does not have any support structure for herself.</p> <p>Masenyoro said she is not happy; she cannot afford to do anything for her kids.</p>

<p>Financial situation</p>	<p>Monthly salary = ZAR 3 900 A good salary for her will be +- ZAR 6 500. She dreams of buying herself a home to live in with my kids. <i>I want to give a better...</i> Masenyoro's salary is for her and her three children. She sends most of her money home for the children and does not have any money for herself. She gets 3 x SASSA grants for the kids = ZAR 1 350. Grandma receives a SASSA grant. Aunt and uncle do not work and receive no grants. Expenses: ZAR 600 = transport money for the three kids; ZAR 350 = for stationery for the kids. ZAR 150 = for crèche for the 3-year-old child; ZAR 1 200 = transport money to get to work Rent = ZAR 800; money sent home to grandma and children = ZAR 500. The government can help improve our lives to create more job opportunities and give free transport for the children. Masenyoro does not have a second income and also does not have money to start something on the side line to earn money</p>
<p>Notes:</p>	<p>Masenyoro started to cry and said she was not happy because she was in her situation.</p>

Participant 3: Small (Interviewed 13 March 2021)

<p>What was her life like when she grew up?</p>	<p>Small grew up in Venda, close to Louis Trichardt, where she stayed with her mom, sister, and three brothers. Her father was not part of their lives. They were six people living at home.</p>
<p>Education and learning after school</p>	<p>Small, finished Grade 11. She did not pass Grade 12. She did not complete her accounting studies. Small did not study after school. If Small can do any job, she will love to be a nurse, and she loves to take care of people. Small had to go home during breaks when she was at school to take care of her mom. Her mom was sick. She used to take her mom outside to get the sun, and then during breaks, she went home to take her mom back inside the home. Small said it was difficult for her, which is also why she could not complete her Grade 12. Sometimes there was no food to eat for the family. Because she took care of her mom, she was very tired and fell asleep at school. Small said she did not reach her dreams. Small does not know about any courses/training her current employer presents.</p>
<p>Life at work</p>	<p>Small said she did not have a choice; she must be a cleaner. She loves her job for now because she must support her mom and kids. She would love to study and get another job. Small does not have a permanent job. Small only has a part-time job because she is a temporary worker. She loves her job and has been with the company for only two months, and last month she only worked three days. Small does not have any other job. The only thing Small would change about her cleaning job is to get a permanent post.</p>

	<p>Small said her manager Eva [a pilot study participant] is her inspiration at work, and she encouraged Small not to give up.</p> <p>Small said she will not give up because Eva told her story.</p> <p>Small's dream is to get a permanent job.</p> <p>Small wants Government to help her to finish her Grade 12. She does not have money to register to finish her matric.</p>
Life outside work	<p>Small does not have a partner or a husband. She lives in Pretoria in a shack, but for now, she shares a shack in Thembisa with six people.</p> <p>Small has two children who live with her mom in Venda, a 2-year-old and a 6-year-old boy. Small thinks that her 6-year-old son will become a police officer and the 2-year-old a soldier. She wants her children to fight for people's rights and against criminals. She does not want her children to become criminals.</p> <p>Small's sister is her support structure. She lives in Venda. She does not have any support in Pretoria or Thembisa.</p> <p>Small's dreams: To have her own home and get a permanent job to support her family.</p> <p>R4000 pm upwards will be a good salary for Small.</p> <p>Small wants to finish her Grade 12, but she does not have any money for further studies.</p>
Financial situation	<p>Small must support her mom and kids with her salary.</p> <p>Small gets a ZAR 900 SASSA grant for her two children.</p> <p>Small's mom gets a SASSA grant.</p> <p>Small's salary = ZAR 548 per month. (Only 3 days' work per month)</p> <p>Transport from Pretoria to Thembisa = ZAR 50 x 2</p> <p>Transport fees differ from place to place. It depends where she must work. Normally ZAR 300 pm for transport.</p> <p>Small does not have money to earn another income, and there is nothing she can do.</p>
Notes:	<p>Small said: "Life is not easy. Any job is fine. I cannot only work three days a month. I want to work to support my family."</p>

Participant 4: Masarosa (Interviewed 13 March 2021)

<p>What was her life like when she grew up?</p>	<p>Masarosa grew up in Mpumalanga in Boekenhouthoek. She stayed with her mother, uncle and his wife, her grandfather, and siblings. They were five children and they were 15 that stayed in one house.</p>
<p>Education and learning after school</p>	<p>Masarosa completed Grade 12 in Alpha School, Hammanskraal. She had no opportunity to study after school. Her dream job will be to be a nurse. She tried to save money to study part-time, but she did not earn enough salary to save money. She does not know of any training provided by her employer.</p>
<p>Life at work</p>	<p>Masarosa said she is proud to be a cleaner. She said she is the breadwinner and is proud to put food on her family's table. Masarosa became a cleaner to get away from home. She started at Supercare as a Temp in 2018, which is her only job. She works 12 days per month, and she works one weekend on and one weekend off. What she likes most about her job is that she is an independent woman, and her job makes her strong. What she does not like about her job is that cleaners are underestimated and treated like they are nothing. She will change the long hours a cleaner must work and also that a cleaner must stand the whole day. It is also difficult for her when she works on a weekend and a Monday she must start with her week's work without a break after the weekend work.</p>
<p>Life outside work</p>	<p>What Masarosa will change in her own life is to become a better person and a better mother to her daughter. She wants to help other people so that they do not have to go through the same difficulties as she is going through. She wants to stay in the same house as her daughter and provide a better life for her. She wants a bright future, and a better salary for her will be +-ZAR 10 000 pm. Masarosa will feel that she is a better person if she can take better care of her family and find a better job. Masarosa said her life outside of work is complicated when asked about her husband/partner. She does not have any support base. She sometimes asks her half-sister for advice. She lives with her aunt and her aunt's son and granddaughter in a complex in Yeoville. Her aunt is a nurse. Masarosa has a 4-year-old girl staying with Sarah's mom. She does not know what job her girl will one day do.</p>

	<p>Masarosa supports 7 people with her salary (herself, her mom, 4 siblings, and her daughter) Masarosa does not have anything to make her life better.</p>
Financial situation	<p>Masarosa's income is between ZAR 3 700 and ZAR 4 500 pm. She supports 7 people with her salary. Mom does not receive a SASSA grant, and she also does not get a child's grant for her daughter (Masarosa's husband works for the Govt, but he does not contribute financially to his daughter).</p> <p>Expenses: Transport: ZAR 2 000; Rent: ZAR 1000 pm includes food; Mom and family: ZAR 1 000 to support the family. She has nothing left of her salary. Masarosa has no other means of earning an extra income. Masarosa said Govt could help them with job opportunities and pay for their studies. Masarosa said she is working with inspirational women at work. The first woman worked as a cleaner, then a receptionist, and now filing blood. The second woman worked at a garage as a petrol attendant to save money. She is now a nurse. Masarosa has no dreams for the future because she has no money to study further or better herself to find a new job.</p>
Notes:	

Participant 5: Mariah (Interviewed 10 April 2021)

What was her life like when she grew up?	Mariah grew up in Evaton in the Vaal with her mom, dad, brother, and sister. They were five people in the house. Her dad was a garden worker, and her mom was unemployed. <i>We were very poor when I grew up, and it was only my dad's income to support our family of five.</i>
Education and learning after school	I completed Grade 12. There was no money to study after school.
Life at work	<p>Mariah works 8 hrs per day, 5 days per week.</p> <p>Mariah's dream job is to become a nurse. She always wanted to help people.</p> <p>Mariah wants to be a cleaner because she only has Grade 12.</p> <p>Mariah never attended any training at work. She said her supervisor would not tell them about training at work or allow them to attend.</p> <p>Mariah did not know that her employer offered a qualification in cleaning.</p> <p>It hurt Mariah to tell people and her friends that she was a cleaner. But she always wanted to be more than a cleaner.</p> <p>Mariah likes a cleaner job because it teaches you about hygiene.</p> <p>Mariah previously had a promotions job and then worked at Lenasia, where she had a sewing job.</p> <p>Mariah does not like to clean toilets and said people are very messy.</p> <p>What she will change about her cleaning job is to tell people to clean after themselves and flush toilets.</p> <p>Mariah said there is nothing she would change at work from her employer's side. Although she said the employer treats them very well, they are treated badly by the people at their work sites.</p> <p>Mariah bakes cakes and sells them at the taxi rank for extra income.</p> <p>She said she accepted her life, she loves her life, but she needs a job.</p>
Life outside work	<p>Mariah has a boyfriend. They have been in a relationship for six years now, and she wants to marry him.</p> <p>Her boyfriend has been a lab technician at Anglo American Mine for two years.</p> <p>Mariah and her boyfriend stay in a garage in Freedom Park. Mariah has a boy (17 yrs.) staying with her mom.</p> <p>Her boyfriend also has a child who is staying with his mother. Mariah and her boyfriend do not have children together. Mariah said she wants her son to become a doctor.</p> <p>Mariah's mom and dad are her support structure. If she and her boyfriend fight, her parents comfort her.</p>

	<p>Mariah's dream for the future is to continue baking until she gets a real job. She said she would love to go to a school to learn more about baking. She bakes cakes at home and sells them at the taxi rank. She has an oven with four plates.</p> <p>She has no money to generate another income. However, if she could buy a sewing machine, she could generate an income by making clothes.</p>
Financial situation	<p>With her salary, Mariah supports herself, her boyfriend, the two children, her mother, and her boyfriend's mother.</p> <p>She said sometimes she does not have money to give to her mom, which is very painful.</p> <p>Mariah gets a SASSA grant for her son = ZAR 450 pm</p> <p>Mariah walks to the taxi rank every day, where she sells the cake for an income.</p> <p>She earns ZAR 700 to ZAR 800 pm by selling cakes. However, she does not know how much her boyfriend earns.</p> <p>Mariah gives the SASSA grant to her son.</p> <p>Mariah feels that Government can support her by giving her a job.</p> <p>She feels that Govt failed them, but she said they could not be blamed.</p> <p>She said it was her fault that she did not go to school after Gr 12.</p> <p>Mariah describes herself as a strong woman, a survivor, a hard worker, and passionate.</p> <p>Her employer will describe her as hard-working, a team worker, a good communicator, and an interactor.</p> <p>What she likes about herself is her eyes, smile, bubbly, and nothing she will change about herself.</p>
Notes:	<p>Mariah was so happy about the interview. She thought this was a job interview. She was disappointed when she heard that this was not a job interview.</p> <p>She had many dreams for her life, but her family was too poor for her to study.</p>

Participant 6: Lala (Interviewed 10 April 2021)	
What was her life like when she grew up?	<p>Lala grew up in Makhado in Limpopo. She grew up with her mom, a single parent. Her dad passed away when Lala was 6 yrs. old.</p> <p>Lala's mom was a domestic worker and went to Gr 2.</p> <p>She has a brother and an elder sister.</p> <p>At home they were five people when she grew up, her mom, brother and sister, and her grandma.</p>
Education and learning after school	<p>Mother worked in Johannesburg and left the two girls with her brother.</p> <p>Completed Grade 11 in Limpopo.</p>
Pregnancies	<p>Lala fell pregnant when she was in Grade 11. She went back to school and fell pregnant again, and her mom then told her to find a job to support her two children.</p> <p><i>“And then after that, I go back to school, and I got pregnant again after two years, and after that my mom said, you can go to work for your kids and start looking for a job, and I start to look for a job, and I got ... I find a job at home at a restaurant, and I started working there to support my kids.”</i></p>
Stress and survival	<p><i>“And after that, the job was finished, and I start to check another job, and then I went [•], and I come here to Joburg, looking for another job, and then I find a job there at Prestige, yeah. I worked for five years night shift. After that contract finished,</i></p> <p><i>I looked for another job, and I got [•], ... went back. And I start to relief there and its other box, after that the supervisor they said they are going to get a site there in Sandton, and I got permanent there.”</i></p> <p>Lala's dream job will be to become a Businesswoman. But unfortunately, this will only be possible when she earns more money.</p>
Life at work	<p>Lala worked at a restaurant where she cleaned the lifts, passages, and toilets.</p> <p>After that, she worked at Prestige cleaning for 5 yrs. She then worked at Alexander Forbes for Supercare, and she is now permanent in Sandton. She has worked for Supercare since 2015 (6 years).</p>
Training	<p>Lala did not know that her employer provided training. She only attended 1 day training since she is with the company.</p> <p>She will be able to attend training at work. “Yes, I would like to learn something.”</p>

Being a cleaner

Lala said she is telling her friends that she is a cleaner. First, she was shy, but now she tells them because this is how she supports her kids. Lala said she could not get another job. To be a cleaner is a job, and she said she would do any job.

Lala earns a second income. She has a small business in Limpopo where she sells dishwashing liquid and foam baths. She said the business is doing well, and she buys stock twice a month. Her mom and daughter are selling the stock.

Lala said she likes her job because she learns from other people and meets many people.

“I meet the different people. So, we learn something, you learn new things every day, I like it. However, moreover, I enjoy my job for now because I work with other people, different people every day, you meet different people, and they greet me, different languages, yeah, you learn something every day.”

Lala does not like to clean toilets and the way people treat cleaners. She said people treat people like they are stupid and mess, and the cleaners must clean after them.

What Lala would change at work: “If job rotation, for example, one day clean toilets, then clean office. She does not like to do the same job every day. She will also change the salaries for cleaners to earn better salaries.

Lala is proud of her job. She can eat and support her children.

She describes herself as a proud person, she likes to learn, and during her off time, she attends a meeting with her friend, a nurse. In addition, she likes to support her family, she is neat, and she likes to learn new things.

“Sometimes, when I started to work as a cleaner, I was ashamed to tell them I am a cleaner, but now that job is to help me to support my kids, now I tell them I am a cleaner. Sometimes when I tell them, they would say, “hey, you are cleaner”, I say “yes, I am a cleaner”, they say “why?”, “but there is nothing I can say, but I am a cleaner.”

She does not like that people judge her because she is a cleaner.

Lala would like to get a better job and earn a better salary to support her family.

Lala said her employer could help her finish her Grade 12 and other training.

Government can help to give them jobs and training.

<p>Life outside work Boys and men</p>	<p>Lala has a boyfriend. They have been together for 10 yrs., but they do not stay together. He is a garden “boy” at UNISA.</p> <p>Lalla rents a room in a shack. She stays alone in her room. 15 people are staying in the structure. She makes food in her room, and her rent is ZAR 400 pm.</p> <p>Lala has two children; her son is 25 years old, and her daughter is 23 years old. Children stay with their grandmother.</p> <p>Her son (dropped out of school, does not have a job) will do anything except a security job. Lala’s daughter (studies at college, public relations, no job) sells the stock for her mom. Her daughter wants to study Public Relations at UNISA.</p> <p>“She wants to help me. She says she has seen my mom struggling. That is why she says, I want to help you, Mom. That is why she wants to go to school.”</p> <p>“Now I see from kids, boys they do not care, as long as they ... but my daughter is struggling, even today, when I stock there with my business, I said go to buy I want to send her to school, and she goes on the street to get, she helps me.”</p>
<p>Financial situation</p>	<p>Lala earns ZAR 3 745 pm. She works 8 hrs per day, 5 days a week.</p> <p>ZAR 400 = rent. ZAR 600 she sends home for her daughter.</p> <p>Lala’s mom gets a SASSA pension.</p> <p>Lala spends the rest on her accounts at Jet, Mr Price, Builders, and transport.</p> <p>Transport = ZAR 790 pm.</p> <p>Lala’s support structure is her boyfriend, brother, and sister. Her brother is a site manager at Fidelity, and her sister does not work.</p> <p>My dream for the future is to be a Businesswoman. She wants to sell soaps and personal care products.</p> <p>A good salary for Lala will be +- ZAR 7 000 pm.</p>
<p>Government</p>	<p><i>“You see, sometimes you can hear the ... from Government, but when you apply, we have this experience, you cannot get that job, we do we have the experience, and Government can try to give us training or whatever like that. “</i></p>
<p>Notes:</p>	

Participant 7: Loveday (Interviewed 10 April 2021)	
What was her life like when she grew up?	<p>Loveday grew up with her parents in Tzaneen Limpopo. Her mom was a domestic worker on a farm, and her dad was a handyman. He was a welder.</p> <p>They were two boys and two girls in the house, and her mom and dad = 6 people plus her two children</p>
Education and learning after school.	<p>She completed her Grade 11 at Magaliesburg State School. She did not pass Grade 12.</p> <p>She wanted to do her N4 after school, but the teacher passed away.</p> <p>When she was 17 yrs. old, her boyfriend brought her from Limpopo to Gauteng, and he supported her with all her school needs.</p>
Communication - work	<p>Loveday dreams of getting an office administration job because she loves to work with people and learn from them and talk to them. She said a learnership would help her to reach her dream.</p> <p>Loveday does not know about the training her company provides. She did not want to confront people to find out.</p>
Life at work	<p>Loveday worked at a Sandton office, and she loved it, but the contract was terminated. She loved it to work with many people. She now works at a church, and it is only Loveday and the security guard. She does not like to only work with a few people.</p> <p>Loveday does not know about training at work, and she will be able to attend if they tell her that there is training.</p> <p>Loveday is not shy to tell her friends that she is a cleaner. She said she feels good about her job and is proud to be a cleaner.</p> <p><i>“I feel so good because cleaning is a simple work which everyone who has not educated anything, it is simple, and I am not shy of because I am cleaner, I tell them I am proud about cleaning, I clean because I do not have enough qualification.”</i></p> <p>Loveday wants to be a supervisor because she wants to treat people nicely and patiently. She said she learned a lot from her previous supervisor, Simon.</p> <p>Loveday has been cleaner since 2018; 3 years.</p> <p>She works 4 days per month.</p> <p>It is her only job. She does not earn any other income.</p>

<p>Life at work</p>	<p>She had no other job before she became a cleaner in 2018. She wanted to study but did not have money. Loveday wanted to sell Tupperware for an extra income, but she said it did not work because clients did not pay.</p> <p>Loveday said the Govt could support them by getting donations from outside the country to fund free education and maybe get money from people who work. Govt can also help her to get a learnership.</p> <p>Her employer can help her to apply for posts and to study further. Also, help her with a teacher or a mentor to learn at work; and if the employer could help her with sponsorship or learnership to get admin work.</p> <p>Loveday loves her job because she can work well with her hands, and she can see how nice she is cleaning. She likes to clean, and she likes everything about her job.</p> <p>The only thing she wants to change at work is to be a supervisor.</p> <p>Loveday is willing to attend training during her off days.</p>
<p>Life outside work Men</p> <p>Lifecycle of kids</p>	<p>Loveday is not married.</p> <p><i>“I do not know if it is a boyfriend, or it is the husband because we are not married yet. Somethings it is the husband because he is going to think, go to school, you know, that person is a husband because he wants a better future for you, but another thing, you can cry, he is just a boyfriend.”</i></p> <p>They have two kids. Live with mother in Limpopo. Little communication with kids. She does not see them except during school holidays. Loveday receives SASSA for two kids.</p> <p>Her boyfriend is self-employed, he is a carpenter.</p> <p>They live in a room in Alexandra in a brick house.</p> <p>Loveday has two kids, a 15-year-old girl and 6-year-old boy. They stay with Loveday’s mom in Limpopo. She does not know what jobs they will one day do, she does not speak to them a lot, and she spends little time with her kids.</p> <p>Loveday has no financial support from anyone.</p> <p><i>“No one can help you with money, all the people they cannot, no one can help you, even I, I do have nothing, all of the people say, even ... I do not have it, no one can help with money. Even no one, if I have a problem, we have to plan.”</i></p> <p>For emotional support, she speaks to her neighbours.</p> <p>Loveday’s dream for the future: To get an office admin job to earn a better salary. A good salary will be ZAR 3 500 to ZAR 4 000 pm, but ZAR 15 000 will be more than enough for her.</p>

	<p>Loveday describes herself as straightforward, always smiling, a proud woman with much patience who can tolerate a lot.</p> <p>She wants to change nothing about herself, but she said maybe she must not laugh so much.</p>
Financial situation	<p>ZAR 700 pm salary because she only works 4 days pm.</p> <p>Expenses: ZAR 200 transport, ZAR 300 for her mom, and ZAR 200 pocket money.</p> <p>Boyfriend earns ZAR 2 000 pm, sometimes ZAR 2 500 pm.</p> <p>Boyfriend buys food, pays for funeral plan and instalments.</p> <p>ZAR 900 SASSA grant for the two children.</p>
Notes:	<p>Loveday said if she can study or learn to better herself, she can find a better job. She is willing to attend training at the office during her off days. She is so proud to be a cleaner.</p> <p>She could not get outside her thinking system on how to improve her life conditions, what the company could do to improve her house, how to improve her children's future. Government should give learnerships.</p>

Participant 8: Linda (Interviewed 10 April 2021)

<p>What was her life like when she grew up?</p>	<p>Linda grew up in Madijane in NW Province near Brits. Linda stayed with her cousins and her Granddad and Grandma. Linda, her sister, cousins, Grandpa, and Grandma, lived together = 7 people at home. Grandmother planted vegetables and sold pigs, chickens, ducks, cows, and goats for an income. “Yes, she was a hard worker. That is how we survived.” Her mom was a domestic worker in Parkmore. Her mom finished Std 6 [Grade 8] in school, and her granny did not work. So, her mom sometimes sent money to support them while they stayed with their grandparents. Linda did not know her dad. In 2019 she went to see him. He was in the hospital. He passed away when Linda was at the hospital gate before she could see him.</p>
<p>Education and learning after school</p>	<p>Grade 12 at Cornerstone Christian School in Silverton. Linda completed a 1-year Secretarial Diploma after school. Her mom paid for her studies. She could not get a post as a secretary because she did not have any work experience. She married at a young age. She received the chance but then married early. Linda’s dream job is to become a nurse. She is a hospital cleaner. She wants to earn more money so that she can study.</p>
<p>Life at work</p>	<p>Linda is a cleaner at Medicross. The only way she can study is to earn more salary. Does not know about training in company. Linda enquired about theatre training, but they were told the Company does not provide it. She said supervisors do not tell them if there is training at work, maybe because they think the cleaners are happy with what they are doing. Linda said she tells her friends that she is a cleaner. She said this is her job and that she is proud of it. She said she cleans at home as she cleans at work. Linda has been a cleaner for 6 years – 4 years for the company. Linda said: “I don’t walk like a cleaner. I walk like somebody on top”. Linda works 5 days a week and sometimes 6 hours on a Saturday and 6 hours on a Sunday. Linda feels that Government cannot help them to have a better life.</p>

<p>Life at work</p>	<p>She feels that the employer can assist with training and help them get a qualification. She said it would be very helpful if the employer could assist with theatre training.</p> <p>Linda previously worked at Servest and before that she was helping her friend at the internet café. Linda loved the internet café, but her friend sold the business after she got divorced.</p> <p>Linda loves her job as a cleaner. “Accepted that God gave me this job, let me cherish it”.</p> <p><i>“Cleaning it is exciting, it is not just cleaning, you know, like when you are at home, there are challenges in cleaning, because it teaches you that this is how we clean and this is where you start, and this is where ... Yeah, top to bottom, this is what you must take and that and that, then you ... you see that ah, ah, there is something that you also learn there.”</i></p> <p>Linda does not like being a cleaner because of the small salary they earn. She said Medicross pays their cleaners better salaries.</p> <p><i>“I am proud. And I do not walk like a cleaner, I walk like somebody on top”.</i></p>
<p>Life outside work</p> <p>Men</p>	<p>Linda sells Avroy Slain for a second income, but it is not going well, especially with Covid 19 because people do not have money to buy beauty products.</p> <p>Changes for the company: <i>“If they give you a site, they must check where you are staying, who is going to travel this far to this place, because I am staying at Mabopane, and you will find that somebody is staying from Thembisa going to Mabopane, she should have maybe worked near, yes. They must check our places. Okay, you are staying at Mamelodi, you are working at Mabopane, but you swap so that you cannot travel this far, and it would be better for us.”</i></p> <p>She got married in 2005, and her husband is a police officer in Bethanie. He only came home to Mabopane during his off days.</p> <p>Linda lives in a brick house with her husband and three kids.</p> <p>Her daughter of 21 years wants to be a fashion designer one day.</p> <p>She does not know what her 7-year-old girl will one day do, and she believes that her 14-year-old son will one day become a soccer player.</p> <p>Linda describes herself as somebody who loves people, likes to work hard, is humble, and likes to take care of other people.</p>

Poverty cycle	<p>As an employee, Linda describes herself as a hard worker, always on time, and she loves to work with other people.</p> <p>“At the moment, I just raise my kids that they do not grow up like I did, go to school and be educated, and they can be able to take care of themselves when I am no longer earning.”</p> <p>Linda does not like that she cannot take care of herself completely. She wants to be independent.</p>
Financial situation Men Dependence	<p>Linda earns ZAR 3 900 pm. Her salary is for her family. Her husband pays for somebody to take care of his mom in Mafikeng.</p> <p>Linda spends more than ZAR 2 000 pm on transport because, if there are no buses, she must take a taxi and it is very expensive.</p> <p>Linda has an unemployed sister, but her children take care of her. The family does not receive any SASSA grants. Linda’s biggest expense is her transport = ZAR 2 000 pm Linda said she loves her house and loves to clean it. Her dream job is to have her internet café. She said she would then stop working as a cleaner and work independently at the internet café. Linda cannot see how government can help her – cannot see the bigger picture</p>
Notes:	

Participant 9: Naledi (Interviewed 10 April 2021)

<p>What was her life like when she grew up?</p>	<p>Naledi grew up in Jane Furse in Limpopo. Her mom looked after them - did not work, and her dad was a farm worker. Naledi said her mom taught them to clean at an early age, and they used to wake up early in the morning. Her mom said the sun must not catch them. Three girls. – 5 people.</p>
<p>Education and learning after school</p>	<p>Naledi passed Grade 12 She did some courses at Pretoria Technicon (Typing, Accounting, and Business Economics). However, she said she could not get a job because they wanted the experience. Naledi’s mom sold vegetables for an income, and she helped pay for Naledi’s studies. Naledi’s dream job will be to open her own cleaning company. She will work hard to reach her dream. She also wants to train people. Naledi does not know if her Company provides training for the employees. Naledi will love to attend training, especially if she can learn to be a teacher to teach other people. She would not be able to attend training at work. She said if she can work during the week and attend training on Saturdays, it will work well.</p>
<p>Life at work</p>	<p>“No, nothing, I was just at home looking for a job. The first time I got a job there at Medicross, and then that is it.” 56 years old. Naledi works at Medicross as a cleaner She has been with Supercare now for 3 years. Before that, she worked as a cleaner for Medicross for 10 years and 5 years at Servest. She has been a cleaner for 18 yrs. Naledi does not have a second job. Naledi works 8 hours a week and sometimes on weekends. Before Naledi became a cleaner, she did not work. Naledi said she loves everything about her job. She said she double-checked her work to make sure everything was properly cleaned. She said you must do your job 100 % and she is so proud of her job. The only thing Naledi does not like about her job is the small salary.</p>

	<p>There is nothing Naledi wants to change about her job.</p> <p>The only thing Naledi wants to change in her life is to extend her house, she said it is too small for the family.</p>
<p>Life outside work</p> <p>Men</p>	<p>Naledi and her family stay in an RDP house in Mamelodi. Her grandchildren stay with them.</p> <p>Her husband does not work. He was a security officer, but he had a stroke and could not work anymore.</p> <p>Naledi has been married for more than 10 years and has two kids.</p> <p>Her 16-year-old boy is mentally disabled, and he attends a special school. She said he is very good with his hands and her special boy.</p> <p>The husband was a security guard. Mentally disabled. Had a stroke. Does not work.</p> <p>Her daughter is 34 years old (unemployed) and has two kids, 15 years and 9 years old.</p> <p><i>“She does [sic] not have a husband, she stays with me, you know, because the kids, so the father of the kids, not taking care anymore, I am the only one who take care of my granddaughters.”</i></p> <p>At home, Naledi takes care of 7 people (Herself, husband, son, daughter, 2x grandchildren, and her sister’s child). All of them live in a 2-bedroom house.</p> <p>Naledi said her support base is her husband. She prays first if something upsets her, then gets a solution, takes a long walk, and then speaks to her husband after she calms down.</p> <p><i>“You know, sometimes ... maybe I am different, because if maybe something is upsetting me, I just need a corner first, and pray, pray, pray, or where I can cry, then ... but I take long time to speak, until I cool down, then I can speak with my husband, yes, and then, that is the one maybe we can sort, but before I can go I must pray first and get a solution, if I did not get the solution, no one I can tell, just keep on praying and then, after that to cool off myself and then it is fine, that is how I work.”</i></p> <p>Naledi’s dream is to open a crèche to look after kids.</p> <p>She describes herself as a good woman who does not fight. She wants to share everything she has with others and always wants to go to church and worship.</p>
<p>Financial situation</p> <p>Dependence</p>	<p>Naledi’s income is her salary = ZAR 3 990 pm.</p> <p>She gets a SASSA grant for her disabled son. Her two grandchildren and her husband get a disability grant.</p> <p>Expenses: Transport = ZAR 80 per day</p> <p>She pays rates and taxes. The rest of the money, buys food, and pays for her son’s transport and electricity.</p> <p>Naledi said the people around her struggle more because they do not have jobs. So, she likes to share with people less fortunate than her. She said the kids in the street always calls her “Ouma, Ouma.”</p>

	<p>Naledi does not have a second income. She wanted to sell things, but too many spaza shops in her neighbourhood.</p> <p>Naledi thinks her employer can help her to get a learnership. She said she is old, and pension is around the corner.</p> <p>Company- sponsorship – to do something she can do in future.</p> <p>She wants Government to help her with a crèche and food and shelter for the kids.</p> <p><i>“Yes, the pension is around the corner, my dear, if I am at home, maybe it can help me”.</i></p>
<p>Notes: SD- Purple</p>	<p><i>“Yeah, they have got everything, and even me, any kind of a person, because I like to share, if maybe my neighbour do not have any food, or maybe the kids are crying I can go what happened, no, nothing, we do not have nothing, I just take, and then we have to share because we are people and you look the way that we live there, some of them, they are not working. And even if I go to the street, they just call me Ouma, Ouma, give me sweets, ZAR 1.00, you know, you see, because they just need ZAR 1.00 because they do not have anything at home.”</i></p>

Participant 10: Queen (Interviewed 10 April 2021)

<p>What was her life like when she grew up?</p> <p>Men</p>	<p>Queen grew up in Limpopo. She stayed with her mom, 3 sisters, and 2 brothers = 7 people. Her mom worked in the gardens on a farm and passed away in August 2007. Queen and her sisters and brothers then stayed together.</p> <p>Queen does not know her father. “He passed away in 2001. I just saw his tombstone. He did not financially contribute to my family and me.”</p> <p>We were 7 people staying at home when I was a child.</p>
<p>Education and learning after school</p>	<p>Queen finished Grade 10 in 2004 and then had to look for a job to support her family. She finished Grade 10 at Shibolo High School, close to her village.</p> <p>After school, she completed a cleaning and fire brigade course in Alexandra.</p> <p>Queen loves to be a cleaner. So, she used to go and stand in a long queue to get a job at Supercare. She started at Supercare in 2016 as a temp and, in 2018, she was permanently appointed – 4 years.</p> <p>Queen attended a course once at Supercare (Chemicals training and colour-coding)</p> <p>She does not know what other training is presented by her Company.</p> <p>She said her supervisor would allow her to attend training.</p> <p>Queen said she does not have friends. She loves to be on her own.</p> <p>She loves her job as a cleaner, and she enjoys it because she does not have another job.</p> <p>She works 8 hours a day, is off on weekends. Works 20 days per month.</p> <p>Queen does not know how the company can help her to better her life, and she does not think Government can do anything for her.</p> <p>Queen does not have a second job.</p> <p>She does not like to talk at work. She just wants to work.</p> <p>In 2010 Queen was selling food at school (pap, wors, chicken, beef, and salad) to ensure that her family did not sleep with an empty stomach.</p>
<p>Life at work</p>	<p>What Queen loves most about her job is to vacuum carpets as it looks good if the carpets are clean.</p> <p>Queen said what she did not like about her job was that she had to clean the whole building alone, but now she is ok. She said the toilets were terrible to clean at Park Station, but she did it.</p>

	<p>Queen said she will love it so much if she can become a receptionist. However, she does not want to stay a cleaner.</p> <p><i>“Because I do not have the other job it is a good job for me, because I do not have another job, if I get another job, it is fine for me.”</i></p> <p><i>“I am a cleaner okay, so, you can come to me, Queen, I have a job to do, I want to take you from here from a cleaner, to go to work at the reception, it is just for example, the reception, yeah well, I am going thank so much if they took me from the cleaner to the reception, you know, as an example. I will like it so much”.</i></p>
<p>Life outside work</p> <p>Men</p> <p>Pregnancy</p> <p>Government</p>	<p>Queen has a life partner. He is also the father of her son. He is doing piece jobs (ceilings, painting, etc.) Queen and her life partner stay in a room in a shack in Alexandra. They have been in a relationship for 21 years. Queen said her son is 20 yrs. old, he lives in Limpopo alone and he is in Grade 10 because he keeps failing. <i>“Yeah, we had twenty-one years now not married, because my son had twenty years, I had one son, one child because we are not married, I do not want to do the children.</i> <i>It was a mistake at the start.</i></p> <p>She said he is like his father and that she works for her son. Queen’s sister is her support structure. Her sister is unemployed. Queen’s dream is to get more money, buy a car, buy a house, and sleep and live nicely like other people. <i>“I am wasting money to the transport, the taxis, the public transport, why can I not get a car or something, but I just wishing that because I do not have money to buy it... Eish, I dream to build a house, but I do not have enough money, you see. See like the other people are living nicely, you see.”</i></p> <p>She describes herself as somebody that takes care of her family. People will say that she, Queen, does not like other people and loves to be alone. Queen said she does not like gossip at work. She wants to work and keep quiet. She likes most about herself to listen to her sister and learn from her.</p>
<p>Financial situation</p>	<p>Salary = ZAR 3 800 pm Expenses: Rent = ZAR 1 000 pm Son = ZAR 800 Late sister’s children = ZAR 800 Transport = ZAR 1 000</p>

	<p>Then she is left with ZAR 600 for food, sometimes ZAR 400 (She uses this to buy tomatoes, carrots, etc. to buy food for her and her life partner)</p> <p>Her life partner earns = ZAR 850 pm</p> <p>Queen supports herself, her life partner, her son, and her late sister's three children with her salary (Total 6 children)</p> <p>Queen said she does not have money to buy anything to sell to earn a second income.</p>
Notes:	Does not know what the company and the government can do to uplift people. She is fixed on the self.

Participant 11: Sibongile (Interviewed 10 April 2021)

<p>What was her life like when she grew up?</p> <p>Pregnancy</p>	<p>Sibongile grew up in Newcastle in KZN with her parents...35 years. Her mom was a domestic worker, no education, and her dad was a construction worker, no education. Sibongile had 5 siblings, and she was child number 3. She said they suffered because they were 6 kids and there was no money at home. They were six girls. Altogether they were 9 people in the house. (Mom, Dad, 5 sisters, herself and her kid) <i>“Always suffering. Because there is no money, and we are too much.”</i></p>
<p>Education and learning after school.</p> <p>Locus of control</p>	<p>Sibongile failed Grade 12, <i>“I was failed.”</i> only completed Grade 11 in Newcastle. She completed a security course, but the salary for a security guard was too little, and she became a cleaner. Did not like it. Salary too small. Her favourite job? <i>“There is nothing I can do; I cannot take anything”</i>.</p>
<p>Life at work</p>	<p>Sibongile works at an office in Woodmead. She does not know about any training at work, and she does not know if she will be able to attend training at work. She said her supervisor would not release her to attend training at work. She said they are 6 people at work, and nobody tells them about training. Does not want to go to training [- from answer]. Sibongile is happy to be a cleaner because she supports her family. She does not have an extra income. Before 2019 Sibongile was a security officer and earned ZAR 2 200 pm What she likes about her job is that the people at work treat her nicely. They show respect to us as cleaners. She does not like the small salary they earn. There is nothing she will change about her job.</p>

<p>Life outside work</p>	<p>Sibongile has a boyfriend, they have been together for one year, and he is a builder – entrepreneur. They do not live together. Instead, Sibongile lives in a shack that she rents in Alexandra. So, they are two people living in the shack.</p> <p>Her daughter stays with her mom in KZN. She is 15 years old and wants to be a pilot. Sibongile said she feels good about it because she will do something better than herself.</p> <p>Sibongile’s mom is her emotional support base.</p> <p>Her dream for the future is to get a better job.</p> <p>She described herself as honest, shy, loving people too much, and caring for people.</p> <p>She said other people would describe her as a good and hard worker.</p> <p>What she likes most about herself in that she is an independent person.</p> <p>What she does not like about herself is that she is very shy.</p> <p>Sibongile said she did not know Supercare had a branch in KZN, and she would love to go back to KZN one day.</p>
<p>Financial situation</p>	<p>Her salary is ZAR 3 700 pm.</p> <p>She supports 9 people with her salary (herself, mom, 5 sisters, her daughter)</p> <p>She receives a SASSA grant for her daughter.</p> <p>Expenses: Transport = ZAR 500 pm, Rent = ZAR 600 includes electricity</p> <p>Send home = ZAR 1 000. The rest of her money is for her and her daughter.</p> <p>She said there is no other way she can earn an income.</p> <p>Her Company can help her to better her life by increasing her salary.</p> <p>Govt can help with job opportunities and a grant for people who do not work and are hungry. They can also take money from people who do work and give it to those who do not have jobs.</p>
<p>Notes:</p>	

Participant 12: Irene (Interviewed 13 May 2021)

What was her life like when she grew up?

Irene grew up in Limpopo, in a rural area, a village.
 She grew up with her mom and grandma.
 Mom was a domestic worker. She was more away in the evenings and normally came home on Fridays.
 Grandma was not working. She was getting her grandfather's pension; he was a soldier.
 Mom and dad were separated when she was still young. Dad sometimes came to my grandmother's home to visit us. He was so happy to visit us, he played with us, and he went back to his wife in the evening.
 Irene has 2 half-brothers and 3 half-sisters. (5 siblings at dad side)
 Irene has a sister and four brothers.
In the house, with my grandmother, it was our six children, my uncle's 3 children, grandmother. (Total of 10 people in the house – over weekends 11 with her mother) Irene's mom came during weekends to visit. "Hey, we were struggling, we were struggling too much, but she was trying, she was trying so hard."

Education and learning after school

Irene completed Grade 10. Sefoloko High School.
 There was no money for school fees to complete my Grade 12. The school was not for free.
 She completed a security course after school and was a security officer.
"I am happy because some other people do not work, they are just sitting at home and I am so happy, and I love cleaning." - two years
 Dream job: Teacher because she likes to talk. She would like to teach English and her home language (Sepedi)
 She said she could still become a teacher but needed to return to school to fulfil her dream. Her problem is money, no money to study. So, she will have to attend school at night.
 Irene knows that the Company presents training, but she does not know what type of training.
 Irene would like to attend training. She said it would be possible to attend training during work time.
 Irene tells her friends she is a cleaner and is happy to be a cleaner. She loves cleaning because other people sit at home, they do not have a job.
 She will tell people to get a job as a cleaner, and even her younger brother is a cleaner. Irene helped him to get a job as a cleaner.

<p>Life at work</p> <p>Dignity</p> <p>Physical harm</p> <p>Cleaners as people –change Respect</p>	<p>Work at Supercare for 2 yrs. now No other income, no 2nd job. Irene works Monday to Friday for a full month. Before she became a cleaner, she was a security officer. Then, the security company's contract ended, and she became a cleaner. Irene likes her job and communicating with people while she cleans. She is always happy at work. <i>“I do not like ... sometimes when you are cleaning for someone, like there is someone, I am cleaning for you, I am cleaning here, you leave me in the office, nê? Then when you come back, they do not see maybe your ball pen, I move it here, I put it there, when you come back you do not find it here, you do not come to me saying, Irene, I do not see my pen, you just say Irene stole my pen, yeah, that I do not like.”</i> Irene does not like vacuuming. <i>“It makes my shoulders painful.”</i> <i>“I can change people to think cleaners are not dirty, they are people like them, then they can respect us. People do not respect cleaners, they mess for example popcorn and Simba chips after we clean and then we must go and clean again, they will not pick it up. People must respect themselves because cleaners respect them.”</i></p>
<p>Life outside work</p>	<p>Irene has been married since 2003. Husband is working at ... They deliver parcels (courier), he is the assistant to the driver. They live in a one-and-a-half-room shack they are renting. Irene, her husband, and two kids live in the shack. Irene has three children. Only two kids live with them; the other kid stays with Irene’s mother. 10 years. – The boy wants to be a soldier 6 years. – Girl (she wants to be everything) 15 years. – The girl stays with Irene’s mom, and she wants to be a doctor. Irene’s support structure is her sister (she lives in Thembisa) and her mother-in-law. Irene’s dream for the future: Want to go back to school to study to get a better job with a better salary. Irene cannot reach her dream: It is difficult without money. Her husband did not work, but now that he has a job, they can maybe do something about her study. Irene has no other way to earn an income, and she has no time to do anything extra. Irene describes herself as a sweet person that likes people but does not like to be with friends all the time. She likes to be at home. Irene describes herself as an employee: Hard worker, likes a clean place. The best thing about Irene that she likes about herself: Friendliness.</p>

	<p>What Irene will change about herself: When she speaks to people, she is scared of hurting people because she can see that their faces change.</p>
<p>Financial situation</p>	<p>Irene sends money to her mom per month = ZAR 1 000 for her mom and girl. Irene's husband: Not sure how much will he earn because it is his first month. Irene's salary: ZAR 3 500 pm Transport: Taxi money = ZAR 42 per day = ZAR 1 300 pm. Irene gets SASSA for three kids = ZAR 1 200 pm; Rent and electricity: ZAR 500 pm Food: ZAR 1 000 pm; Identity [clothing shop]: ZAR 300 pm (Irene and kids' clothing) No other expenses</p>
<p>Men</p>	<p>When her husband did "piece jobs", they bought building supplies, for example, cement, to build a house for her kids. Irene said her kids are happy; they have clothes, eat every day. Irene's kids always want ZAR 1 or ZAR 2 to buy "Niknaks". Each of the kids gets ZAR 5 every day to take to school and a lunch box. The kids walk to school, are close to home, do not pay school fees. The employer can uplift her: To promote Irene to Supervisor, earn more money, and study. Govt can uplift Irene: Give her family an RDP house. Irene is on a waiting list; she went to the Dept of Housing.</p>
<p>Notes:</p>	

Participant 13: DJ (Interviewed 13 March 2021)

<p>What was her life like when she grew up?</p>	<p>DJ grew up in Polokwane. She stayed in Pax Village with her mother and father. Her mother was a housewife. Dad worked at Iscor in Pta. Dad stayed in Pretoria and only came home month-end or every second month to bring money home. At home, we were nine people.</p>
<p>Education and learning after school</p>	<p>DJ had High School – Grade 11 No education after school She had too many friends and many house tasks to do because she was the first born and did not complete Grade 12. Dream job: DJ loves cleaning too much; she can answer the phone nicely. She would like to be a receptionist. However, she cannot and does not want to do anything else. Computer training is too difficult. <i>“When we were there, when Mam when we were there, teaching us the computer, but we did not finish [•], but it is so difficult, jo, computer, it is too difficult Mamma, jo. When I take the mouse, I am shaking.”</i> <i>“I like cleaning, cleaning is my first, first, first, and the last.”</i> For DJ to become a receptionist: Irene said she must first complete Grade 12 DJ knows that her employer gives training. (Not sure what type of training) Irene started with a computer course but did not finish, and it is difficult for her. DJ will be able to attend training. DJ is very proud to tell people that she is a cleaner. She loves cleaning, and everything must be cleaned and shining. She double-checks that all her work is done. She makes 100 % sure everything is done well.” Oh, I am very proud, and the people like me.</p>
<p>Life at work</p>	<p>Since 2012 DJ has been employed at Supercare. Cleaner for 8 years. DJ sells chappies, sweets, “Niknaks”, peanuts at work for extra income. She uses them for taxi money. She earns about ZAR 40 per week with her sales. <i>“I am selling peanuts, yeah, at my work, I am selling peanuts, I am selling Niknaks, I am selling “Chappies” [bubble gum], I am selling sweets, to increase my money, and for taxi.”</i> DJ did not have another work before she became a cleaner. DJ likes her job: Cleaning is her first and her last. She loves cleaning so much. What DJ does not like about her job: If she cannot clean properly, it makes her upset.</p>

	<p>What will DJ change at work: When she put a sign outside, people still come there where she cleans, and people cannot greet you. They just come in and go. Also, people sometimes are rude; they walk on wet floors.</p>
Life outside work	<p>She has been married for 10 yrs. Husband works as a driver. They live in Thembisa in an RDP house. DJ, husband and two kids. Two kids are still in school. The girl is at Bloemfontein University (studying law with a loan). NWC – Boy studies a course in maintenance. Grade 9 – Boy, not sure yet what he will do one day. Also, she takes care of her sister’s 5 children. They do not have a mom or a dad and live in Eldorado. Her sister’s firstborn daughter’s boyfriend hanged her sister’s 3 kids in a tree. He is still out and not in prison yet. Her sister’s kids, one is a nurse and the other one a mechanic at Fly Safair. Support structure: Her close family is her support structure. DJ describes herself as someone that loves her job and loves the people. What DJ loves the most about herself: Likes makeup and nice clothing. She likes to dress up nicely without spending much money. What DJ does not like about herself: She gets upset or angry (short-tempered). She wants to change her salary. Her salary is too low. As a result, she cannot buy a car but has a driver's licence. The employer can give a better salary, ZAR 5 000 per month will be a good salary for her. Government can help people that do not have jobs and do not have food. Must increase SASSA grants.</p>
Financial situation	<p>DJ’s salary: ZAR 3 900 pm supports her three kids. DJ sometimes sends money to her sister’s children. Husband salary: ZAR 9 000 pm SASSA grant for the Grade 9 boy DJ cannot see how she could uplift herself and is focused on herself. Government must enlarge [increase] SASSA. Transport (Taxi) = ZAR 1 200 pm Food: ZAR 1 600 pm Gets about ZAR 12 000 pm with her and her husband’s salary. Saving money for big expenses Electricity: ZAR 600+. They like to cook outside on a fire.</p>
Notes:	

Participant 14: Lesedi (Interviewed 13 March 2021)

<p>What was her life like when she grew up? Men</p>	<p>Lesedi grew up in Alexandra. Unfortunately, she did not have a good life when she grew up. Mom and dad separated. Mom was pregnant with Lesedi when they got divorced. Her brother and sister moved with her dad to Botswana. Mom and Lesedi stayed in Alexandra.</p> <p><i>“When my Mom and Dad separated, my Mom she was pregnant with me, so that is when my Mom and Dad separated, but my other brother and sisters were already in the picture, so they moved to Botswana, I stayed in Alex with my Mom, it was not easy for my Mom, but I am here, I am grown up, I am somebody else today. ...she struggled staying with me around, I had to sleep to family outside her workplace, she could not take care of me that much; usually, I used to stay with my uncles, my Aunts, and many things happened but, now I am over it.”</i></p> <p>Mom was a domestic worker and then worked at a nursing home. She also worked in a laundry. Lesedi had to stay with her uncles and aunts while her mom was working.</p> <p>Lesedi’s aunt worked in a factory making clothes. She maintained them on little food, and Lesedi had pap and cabbage nearly every day. I cannot remember what work my uncle was doing. He did work; he was providing for them.</p> <p>There were +- 10 people in the home where she grew up.</p> <p>Lesedi felt like the world never liked her. “Many things you cannot change.”</p>
<p>Education and learning after school</p>	<p>Completed Grade 11</p> <p>Lesedi was a special kid as she was a bit slow in everything at the Waldorf school.</p> <p>She had people from Germany that paid her school fees (sponsors). She communicated through posts and letters to the sponsors, but she never met them personally.</p> <p>Lesedi had nobody who helped her with schoolwork. Her aunt and uncle could not help her.</p> <p>She completed a call-centre course and wedding-planning course. Also attended other small courses.</p> <p>She did not have the privilege to go to a white person to ask for help.</p> <p>Lesedi wanted to be a lawyer to defend people. She wanted to do something good for other people. She knows she cannot help everybody, but she can change 2 or 3 of them.</p> <p>For Lesedi to become a lawyer, she would need money.</p> <p>Lesedi only attended a first-aid course at Supercare. She does not know about any other training.</p> <p>She tried, but they said there was no current training.</p> <p>They allowed her to attend first-aid training while she was working.</p>

	<p>Lesedi tells people she is a cleaner; she is proud of her job. In the beginning, she was shy, but now she is ok, it is a job like any other job. “At the end of the day, it is you that must sustain yourself, like your job, love your job,” she said. “The rest will follow.”</p>
<p>Life at work</p>	<p>Lesedi has been a cleaner at Supercare since 2020 – 1 year and had no real income before. A full-time job at Supercare. Before her job at Supercare, she worked in a coffee shop for 6 months. Before the coffee shop job, Lesedi sold food and cleaned her home, washing clothes. She has no other income currently. Lesedi used to sell beauty products, but she stopped because she had many things to think about, and it was just too much for her. She must take care of her kids, her sister’s kids, and her mom. Lesedi's sister’s kids love her and like to stay with her. It is a challenge for her because whatever money she earns, she uses to maintain the family. What she likes at work: Communicating with people. What she does not like: When people are back-stabbing at work. People do not think you work hard to make a place better and cleaner. People are not greeting, but when they want something, they come to us. <i>“They do not take us like we are as one, they take us like we are just cleaners, we are here to make sure that the doors are clean, the tables are clean, the floor is clean, and that is it. So, that is something that annoys me sometimes, yeah, I feel like, okay, these people, just because they are paying us, we are nothing, yeah, we are just cleaners to make their place look nice for their clients and that is it. Yeah, and that is it, so, for me, I find it so annoying and sad at the same time. I find it so sad at the same time, what can we say, it is part of our job description.”</i> What will Lesedi change at work: The greeting part, the respecting part. People do not respect cleaners; they take cleaners like humans. They do not see us as one, and they take cleaners as somebody who must make sure everything is clean. She feels that they are nothing just because these people are paying us. They are just cleaners that make the place look nice for their clients. For Lesedi, she found this so annoying and sad at the same time. What Lesedi will do if she is the company's CEO: She will firstly look at respect because if you give respect to me, I will give respect to you. Lesedi said that if she makes a mistake, people must tell her, not go to other people and tell them. Talks to a person immediately if you see a mistake. The person can then rectify that mistake. If she, as a boss, is wrong, she will apologize. Bosses do not see that cleaners also have feelings; cleaners also go to the toilet and cry.</p>

<p>Life outside work Men</p>	<p>Lesedi has a boyfriend. Together since 2016 – 4 or 5 years <i>“For now, he is still my boyfriend. But, maybe in future he will be my husband; you never know God’s plans.”</i> Her boyfriend works in a Chemical Company in Midrand; he is a supervisor. He does not earn a good salary. Sometimes he gets less than ZAR 3 000 pm, sometimes more than ZAR 4 000 pm. No work, no pay policy at his work. Lesedi does not live with her boyfriend. He also lives in Alexandra. He has two beautiful girls (8 yrs. and 6 yrs. old) Lesedi stays with her mom and children in a 2-bedroom house. They are six people in the house. Mom is a SASSA pensioner. Lesedi normally visits her boyfriend with her kids. Lesedi has 4 kids: She motivates her children to be responsible in life. 17-year-old Boy – He wants to be an electrician. He is in a special school because he is a slow learner. 12-year-old Girl, 8 year-old Girl, 6-year-old Girl. What Lesedi would change in her life: <i>“The growing-up part was not nice; I will change that.”</i> The divorce part I would have changed. Maybe if my parents did not divorce, I would have studied and not have 4 kids. <i>The kid’s dad passed away on 2 May 2017. He was living with another person. He left nothing for the kids. He was abusive toward me but was loving with his kids. Lesedi took him to court. She was scared that he was going to kill her and the kids. He drank poison, committed suicide. He was the dad of the two small girls. The dad of the 17-year-old and 12-year-old disappeared.</i> Lesedi makes a good role model for her children. She sits down with them, communicates with them, tells them about the reality of life. She shows them on TV what life is like. She tells them what is going on in life outside, all the dangers, all the reality. She tells her children she helps them, but they must take responsibility for them to succeed in life. Describes herself as a loving, bubbly person, but she can also be a serious person. She likes to help people who are not feeling well. What she hates about herself is being angry and crying a lot. So many things make her angry. It happens quickly, and she is a short-tempered person. She tells her problems to stay at the gate: when she goes home, she will pick up her problems again. An employer can uplift her: More training/attend courses.</p>
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	<p>Govt can uplift me: Laughing, nothing they can do for us. She sees and hears from Govt: they make promises and do nothing. Because of Govt, our jails are full. Maybe the private sector can help us. A good salary for Lesedi would be ZAR 7 000 pm. She will send her children to better schools.</p> <p>Dream for future: Own cleaning business (corporative of cleaning) to also help others. Leaving my kids with a legacy to help others so that God can provide more for them).</p> <p>Lesedi wants to <i>start next year with her own cleaning business</i>. It is a huge umbrella out there; it is going to be challenging.</p>
Financial situation	<p>ZAR 3 500 pm salary</p> <p>Mom SASSA grant = ZAR 1 800 SASSA for kids = ZAR 1 700</p> <p>Lesedi looks after 6 people with the money in the house. Transport (taxi) = ZAR 600 pm</p> <p>Debt (Garnishee order against her from Truworths (ZAR 50 pm), Home Choice (ZAR 1 600 still outstanding) (pays ZAR100 pm) Reggae (ZAR 2 000 outstanding, pays ZAR 50 pm), Ackermans (ZAR 5 000 outstanding pays ZAR 50 pm) She learned a lot from expensive things, no more expensive things.</p> <p>It is difficult for Lesedi to increase her income. She has a lot on her mind. She thinks of her mom, her kids. Who will take care of her kids and what about her studies? So much about which she must think.</p>
Notes:	<p>She cannot see beyond her own troubles – the company can help with upliftment – attend courses.</p> <p>Government: She blames the government for full jails.</p>

Participant 15: Busi (Interviewed 13 March 2021)

<p>What was her life like when she grew up?</p>	<p>Grew up in KZN, uMzimkhulu. She stayed with her mother, grandmother, her four siblings and ten cousins and her mom never worked. Father worked in the mines in the Free State. He only came home twice a year. Father sends money home. When she was 15 yrs., she also received a child support grant. It was a crazy house with 17 people in the house.</p>
<p>Education and learning after school</p>	<p>Busi was the first one of the 17 who finished Grade 12. She completed an HRM Diploma at a College in uMzimkhulu in 2012 but did not get her certificate because she could not complete her practical. Dream job: Education, my heart is in education. I want to be a teacher at school. She would love to provide training in the private sector. To get to her dream she needs proper education, for which she needs money. What can you do to uplift yourself: <i>She is studying bachelor's in education. NSFAS is paying for her books. Education and experience are what she needs to get to her dreams.</i> She completed the assistant chef course Level 1 at Supercare. Busi knows about all the training Supercare presented. When Busi worked at the site, she did not know about the training Supercare presented. She said that the people at the sites do not know about the training at the Company. It is difficult because the cleaners do not belong to the sites or the company; they are in the middle. Training must be communicated to cleaners on the sites; for example, give each site or supervisor a computer so that the cleaners can have access to posts, adverts, learnerships, internships, etc. If the company can advertise vacant posts on the Company's website, it will help a lot. A Supercare information board at sites will help a lot of supervisors can put the vacant posts on the board so that the cleaners can have access to the posts. If the supervisors can print and paste the posts at the sites, it will help. If a few sites can be reached with information, it will already help. The cleaners are so surprised when Busi tells them about training. They know nothing. When Busi worked at the site, she did not know anything about training. <i>Because if there are opportunities like I have also had since I was working on sites, they offered internships, and I qualified for those internships. However, I did not know because I was sent on site, so I did not know anything, and I get so ... I do not know, angry seeing other people that I know that I am educated more than them, they are sitting there, I should have been there as well. However, unfortunately, I did not know anything about those opportunities.</i></p>

For now, I think on site there should be PCs, maybe one, not every class should have a PC, but maybe our supervisor should have one, if there are internal post open opportunities, learnerships, internships, apprenticeship, anything, then we can access them at the worksite, if they post some they can see it is there, but not all of them, because I go to that website and I was like angry, but you do not hear, they do not advertise learnerships, internships, they do not. They just advertise senior positions that we do not even qualify for.”

“Yeah, even few sites can be able because right now there is nothing that is happening on site, there is no information from the Head Office to the cleaners, they know nothing, I have been there, they know absolutely nothing, even now if they come to training I have to tell them opportunities, everything that we are offering here, they get surprised, even about the website, hey guys, there is a website here at home, you actually log in as an employee of Impact, they know nothing about it and they have to go to their phones, this is how you do it and this is how you check the vacancies, here training, when they come to do their training, so yeah, they know nothing about it.

It is not a problem for cleaners to attend training, they must look at the qualifications you have. Training Dept must do more research on qualifications of cleaners to see what training they need. There is a perception that cleaners do not have qualifications and that is not true.

Busi does not tell people that she is a cleaner, she just says that she is a trainer. People expect her to be a trainer because they know she was so brilliant in school but that is not the case, after Grade 12 life was so difficult. Some people cannot go to university to study, then sometimes there are teenage pregnancies, and some children must leave school to find a job and help their parents and siblings with an income. Busi is very ashamed to tell people she is a cleaner, she is ashamed to be a cleaner. Cleaning is not a bad job it is what people made it look like and the kind of employees that are there in the cleaning business. Most of them are old, the young ones dropped out of school. They are the so-called “losers”, now we are like “failures”. People do not take us seriously; they just look at us as cleaners.

Without cleaners, we would not function well. People will not be productive without cleaners at work. The streets will be disastrous without cleaners.

Cleaning as a professional job: Offer more than just a cleaner for example cleaner/office assistant. Our cleaners are very capable. On-site we do invoices, data capturing, etc. We do not only clean at sites. If Supercare just knows how much the cleaners can offer them and bring them in money. Busi does not think cleaners see cleaning as a professional job, they just see it as a means of income. Before offering training to cleaning, uplift their thinking first. Trainers must motivate cleaners to attend training and explain to them how the training can help them. Cleaners do not take training seriously.”

**Life at work
Being a cleaner**

Busi has been a cleaner for 7 yrs. She knows of Virginia doing well going through the ranks.
"I tell them lots of stories, but I never tell them that I am cleaner, especially the people that I went to school with. No, I just got back from home at KZN, oh God, they will ask you, "what are you doing in life?... blah, blah", and I will say: "I am a trainer", because that is where they expect me to be because you were excelling at school, I am sure you are very far now, and it is not always the case after the Matric... Life tends to be so difficult because of... maybe parents cannot pay for your institutional fees and maybe teenage pregnancies for other cleaners, you have to drop everything and go to look for work, and not enough income that our Father brings at home, now you have to go assist the Father to actually ... for your siblings back at home, actually to get enough food and education and stuff, so you have to drop out, so our peers do not understand that, they expect you from... straight from High School, Varsity.
I am really ashamed, to be honest with you.

No, it is not a bad job, it is what people have made it to look like, and the kind of employees that are there in the cleaning industry, because I do not want to lie to you, most of them are old, if they are young, they are not literate, they are the so-called, losers, if I may say it like that, who dropped out of school, the woman who might have misbehaved and dropped the school and yeah, now we are like failures, that is why ... so that is what makes us so ashamed to be doing this job. People will not take you seriously, that, ha, you are cleaner or, meaning you are not a sinner you did not go to school because you were mischievous, it is not always the case."
"We see cleaning as just a means of getting paid, nothing at all. Even the way we behave at work, we behave ourselves, we do not take it seriously as a professional job, as actually working on a professional level with professional people, we just see it as just a means of getting income and that is all, that is how many cleaners personally feel because you are there, you are not going anywhere."

No second income. Busi works the full month.
Her first job is at Supercare.
What do you like about your job: The salary? Meet new people. Listen to people, Socialising with people she works with and works for.
What she does not like: Treatment by people, people look down on us, we are not taken seriously, we are like robots. We are treated better here at the Head Office than at sites.
What can we change at sites for the cleaners: Make the cleaners feel they belong, give them full access to Head Office, they must be exposed to what is the company about, offering more skills to them. Give them full access to internal emails, internal posts. Cleaners do have email addresses. Young girls are working at Supercare, and they

	<p>do have access to emails. Cleaning can be a steppingstone for somebody to get to their dreams. This is why I am a cleaner. I will get to my dreams.</p> <p>There is not enough equipment at the sites. The cleaners on sites need more equipment. Even a cleaning cloth is a luxury at a site. It is not good for the Company's image. We do not even have refuge [sic] bags on site. The area managers must do more liaison with the clients. There is a lot of problems at the site that can cause the contracts to be terminated. Chemicals are used inappropriately.</p> <p><i>"How people treat us because we are cleaners, they look down on us, they see us as, how I put it, because I do not want to use the word 'failures', but they do not take us serious[ly] as people that they can have conversations with, people who have dreams, it is like we are just statues that are robots... Yeah, it is like we are robots that are just here to clean and shut up and go. We are isolated, I will not be saying it here, at home, but on-site, we are isolated, we are just cleaners, nothing more. But here at Head Office, things are different actually. Because I have been on site, when I come here at home, I see things are different here. We are actually called, come ... we get to interact with the CEO's, we get liked, it is not the same at all, we are like ... because we belong, yeah, but on-site, it is a different story."</i> Give people opportunities</p>
<p>Life outside work</p>	<p>Busi has been married for 7 years. Busi, her husband, and two boys (2 yrs and 4 yrs old)</p> <p>"My boys must not be cleaners at all. They must achieve what I did not achieve. They must achieve greatness."</p> <p>My husband and I take care of a total of 11 people, us plus family members.</p> <p>My husband and I almost earn the same salary, and he does not earn much.</p> <p>My husband is my support base.</p> <p>Kate at work is also a support base. "I do not have an approachable mom. I did not grow up happily with my mother. I was so afraid of my mom. She was frustrated and not the happiest woman in her life."</p> <p>Best character trait: Very patient, she likes to educate people, likes to offer information to people, passionate to uplift people.</p> <p>What Busi will change about herself: I cannot say "no". She says "yes" to maybe ten people a day, making her supervisor frustrated.</p> <p>The company can uplift cleaners: Have seminars for cleaners, allow cleaners to talk. Learn more about cleaners, their dreams, and ambitions. Cleaners do not even know that they have dreams.</p> <p>Govt tries to give our children free education. Govt can open doors for practise. Education without providing an intern job helps nothing.</p>

Financial situation	I receive SASSA grants for my two children. Transport = Husband drops me off at work. Salary = ZAR 3 500 pm Do not pay rent, own shack. We are building a house in Limpopo, Phalaborwa. My husband is from there. Busi wants to finish her education.
Notes:	External locus of control.

Participant 16: Mpho (Interviewed 17 April 2021)

<p>What was her life like when she grew up?</p>	<p>Mpho and her sister grew up in Swaziland with her grandparents. They lived on a sugarcane farm, and her grandparents worked at the Sugarcane Company. Her parents were teenagers when her mom fell pregnant with her, and her dad was 16 yrs. old. Mpho does not know her mom. Her dad only came a few times to Swaziland to visit them. Her dad is a boilermaker, and she now sees him more regularly. Her grandparents are her dad’s parents. She and her sister have the same parents, but none knew their mother. When we grew up, we were 4 in the house, my grandparents, I, and my sister.</p>
<p>Education and learning after school</p>	<p>Mpho attended Mhlume primary and secondary school in Swaziland. She completed her Grade 12 in South Africa. She is good at accounting and completed the AAT 1 and AAT 2 level UK courses but could not finish because of her bad eyesight. She had a cornea transplant, but it was not successful. She only had one cornea transplant; she was supposed to have both eyes done, but she was too scared. The doctor said she must get a donor to get another transplant.</p>
<p>Life at work</p>	<p>Mpho works in Primrose, Germiston, at a Care Centre. She is a cleaner, and Elmarie is her supervisor. Mpho previously worked as a Debtors’ Financial clerk at a physiotherapist, but she could not do the job because of her eye problem. In addition, the computer made her eyes tear. She then worked as a Debtors’ clerk at a company that sells grinding machines, but she experienced the same problems with her eyes and quit her job. She then became a cleaner. Mpho did not attend any training with her current employer as her manager did not tell her about training at work. However, she would love to attend any training courses at work. Mpho tells people that she is a cleaner, but people look down on them if they hear that they are cleaners. People see them just as “ordinary cleaners”. Mpho said she treats cleaners with respect when she looks at them because she knows how hard they work. She has been working as a cleaner for the past 5 yrs. at the Care Centre and has no other income. So, the cleaning job is putting food on the table. Mpho works 7 days on, 7 days off. She is currently looking for a second job, even if she can be a tea lady at the hospital. Mpho said she did not like her job because it was not what she wanted. She does not like cleaning, but she likes socialising with the elderly. Some of the residents are friendly, and some are difficult. She would like to become a caregiver, but she did not know if she will cope because of her bad eyesight.</p>

Life outside work	<p>Mpho has a boyfriend who is a tailor making clothes. He also designs and makes clothes for Mpho. They live in Primrose in a back room of a house. They are three living in the room (Mpho, the boyfriend, and their son)</p> <p>Mpho and her boyfriend have two kids. A girl, 10-years old that lives with Mpho's dad, and their son, 12-years old, who lives with them.</p> <p>Mpho said her girl is brilliant and can do any job she wants.</p> <p>She does not know what her son will do one day because he has the same problem with his eyes, and she and he must also go for corneal transplants. In Primrose Primary school, he battles with his schoolwork and the teachers do not help him.</p> <p>Her boyfriend and her sister are her support base.</p> <p>Mpho's dream is to start a business. They have a business selling second-hand tyres in Benoni, but it is not going well because of Covid and because they do not have a certificate to keep the business open. So, they pay the police bribes to keep the business open because they must pay their employees and pay rent. They do not have a choice.</p> <p>She described herself as shy. She is happy with her boyfriend, and she was very happy as a child because her grandparents gave her a good life. She is a "fighter", she fights for things for herself and does not give up hope. She said she even found a low job after her operation failed (cleaning job).</p> <p>Elmarie will describe her as a hardworking person.</p> <p>The residents like her because she socialises with them.</p>
Financial situation	<p>Her salary is ZAR 3 500 pm salary (14 days salary, 11 hours per day)</p> <p>She supports herself, her boyfriend, and their two children with her salary.</p> <p>She does not receive any SASSA grants.</p> <p>Her salary is mainly for her kids, and she cannot afford to buy food and pay rent.</p> <p>Her husband pays the electricity and rent (ZAR 2 000 + ZAR 400)</p> <p>Her employer can help her with a computer course, for example, the courses blind people do and then with a job where the company can use her).</p> <p>Govt could help with a job where she could work for herself. They can help her with an operation to get her eyes fixed and send her for counselling because she is scared to go for an operation.</p> <p>She can help herself get an operation and then get an accounting job.</p>
Notes:	<p>She kept mentioning that she needed counselling, scared after the operation failed.</p>

Participant 17: Lerato (Interviewed 17 April 2021)

<p>What was her life like when she grew up?</p>	<p>Lerato grew up with her grandmother and her aunt in Vereeniging. She said her mom did not care about her. They lived on grandma’s salary; she just knew her grandma worked at a factory selling milk because they always had milk in the house. Grade 1 to Grade 3, she lived with her grandma. In Grade 3 she moved to Vosloorus with her parents. Lerato fell pregnant after school, and she said her parents were so disappointed with her. <i>“I fell pregnant after matric, and then I had a baby. Then, from there, my parents were a little bit upset, disappointed. Then, from there, I told myself “Okay, there is a child, let me rather help, something to do so that me and my kid, we can survive.”</i> She then started working at a container where they rent out cell phones (public phones). Her dad was a forklift operator in Wadeville. When they grew up, there were 9 people in the house (Grandma, aunt +3 kids, herself, her other aunt, and two uncles)</p>
<p>Education and learning after school</p>	<p>Failed Grade 12 in 2007. Completed Grade 11 in Vosloorus. She fell pregnant and did not go back to school. <i>“... I do not know because that time I was just hungry to go back to school, so, because of I could not go anywhere, so, like my mind went blank, I just failed everything, so I could not, when I think of anything or whatever, so, I just continued with life.”</i> She could not study; her dad was the only breadwinner. In 2008 she was busy with ABET, but she could not receive a certificate because she moved back to Vereeniging. She would love to be a psychologist or policewoman if she can do any job. She said education is the key to success; if she can finish matric and get a licence, she can still become a police officer. Lerato does not know about any training at work. She asked if she could get training in cleaning at work to make her work more enjoyable. She cannot attend training during working hours, work [is] 7 days [on], and 7 days off. She will attend training during her off days. She does not tell people that she is a cleaner. She just tells them she works and is making a living for herself. Sometimes she is embarrassed to be a cleaner, sometimes not. She said she must work to support her family. <i>“Because it is not easy to tell somebody that I am a cleaner, I tell them I am working, and then I just give them where I am working, I will just tell them that I am working, I am making a living for myself and for my family.”</i></p>

	<p><i>Do you feel embarrassed to be a cleaner?</i></p> <p><i>Sometimes, yes. Sometimes, no, because these days, if I quit this job and sit at home, I cannot expect my husband or my Father to help me with anything I need, especially with the kids, because they have to go to school, I cannot ask for money for the pads, to my Father, so, I have to stand on my own, find the reality of life.”</i></p>
Life at work	<p>Lerato is a general worker at a Care Centre. Cleaner or general worker for 10 years General worker = Cleaner + extra jobs She has different benefits than a cleaner and has been 10 yrs. in her current post. She joined Table charm (Selling household items and makes a little profit, ZAR 300 pm, which she uses for taxi money. Her first job was a small job at a container where she was in charge of cell phones (public phones) Her general worker post = Cleaning storeroom, toilets, and rooms. She used to do the laundry but not anymore. She now works in the red passage where new people are isolated for 10 days. Lerato loves to work with the elderly and works with difficult and easy people. She consoles them, making them feel that she is their daughter when they feel lonely. She does not like it when stubborn older people fight with her. She would love to change her general worker post to a caregiver position. What she would change about her current job is to become a supervisor. She is good at working with people, although it is not easy to work with people. Now she is caught in the middle, looks after people, and cleans.</p>
Life outside work Men	<p>Lerato’s husband is a foreigner and owns a Tyre Business in Germiston. <i>Tyre shop is his only business.</i> The tyre business is quiet and only busy when people want to travel during the Easter and December holidays. She and her husband live in Elsburg in a backroom outside a house. Lerato, her husband and their 2 kids live there. Her girl is 12-years old. She is brilliant and wants to be a lawyer. Her son, 7-years old, is passionate about learning and good at his schoolwork. Lerato wants her children to live and get to their dreams. Lerato’s sister is her support base. They lost their brother two years ago. <i>Her dream is to get a home for my kids and take care of my parents.</i> Her plan to get there is to study, get a qualification, and find a better job. She knows that her children are well cared for, she takes them to school. Her children are not demanding. She tells them to focus on schoolwork and to be successful in life. She describes herself as kind, loving and friendly. She normally asks people why they are not friendly/happy, sits down with them, and makes them laugh. Elmarie will say that she is friendly and hardworking.</p>

	<p>The residents loved her and gave her a donation after being mugged and robbed of her money. They recognised her as a person.</p> <p>Lerato's best personality trait is to socialise with people. She loves people.</p> <p>She will change about herself: To be too good to people, because they take advantage of you when you are too good to people.</p>
Financial situation	<p>Salary = ZAR 3 500 pm. Including Public holidays = ZAR 3 900 pm</p> <p>She supports her parents with food. Her dad does not work anymore.</p> <p>Lerato buys food, and her husband tries to help with the rent.</p> <p>ZAR 900 SASSA grant for the two children = School fees</p> <p>A good salary for Lerato would be +- ZAR 6 000 pm for her to save money.</p> <p>Expenses: Taxi = ZAR 650 pm, Rent = ZAR 2 800 pm</p> <p>Employers can help uplift the cleaners by monitoring them and promoting them to a higher level and sending them for training when they do well.</p> <p>Govt can help with job opportunities. Govt sometimes helps, but people cry that they do not have jobs.</p> <p>They can assist cleaners with studies.</p> <p>Lerato said she could uplift herself by working hard to get a promotion and to go back to school to get her qualification to become a psychologist.</p>
Notes:	

Participant 18: Makhanane (Interviewed 17 April 2021)

<p>What was her life like when she grew up? Men</p>	<p>Makhanane grew up in Atteridgeville up to the age of 5 years. 5 years to 16 years stayed in Limpopo. Her mom did not work. When her father left, her mom sold bread and achar at school to earn an income. In the house were her mom, herself, sister, and two brothers – 5 people. Makhanane moved back to Pretoria at the age of 16 and, at the age of 17, she fell pregnant. Makhanane said she did not have a happy time as a child, even now. She said she did not get happiness in life.</p>
<p>Education and learning after school</p>	<p>Grade 10 completed. After school, she started with her learnership at Supercare and completed her Level 1 (Certificate). Makhanane does not know of any other training that her employer offers. She was working at “PicknPay”. The contract was terminated and, on Monday 19 April, she will start a new contract in Pretoria West. Makhanane will be able to attend training at work. Her dream job is to be a receptionist. She is talkative, a good team leader, and loves to talk to people. She wants to complete a management course to take care of herself and her family. Makhanane said she completed her Level 1 in cleaning. Although she said the certificate did not help her become a team leader, her hands helped her become a team leader.</p>
<p>Life at work</p>	<p>Makhanane is a team leader and a cleaner. She said she was cleaning with the cleaners. Although her payslip states that she is a cleaner, she gets a team-leader allowance. In 2003 she started at Supercare with a learnership. She was the only breadwinner taking care of herself, her mom, her child, her sister's child, and her two younger brothers – six people. – 17 years a cleaner. In 2010 she was a team leader at Woolworths. She said life was so tough that she could not even buy juice. She only buys potatoes and maize to take care of her family. To earn a second income, she sells fruit. Makhanane is the only breadwinner in the family. Makhanane tells people that she is a cleaner. However, it makes her feel sad because people treat cleaners badly and take advantage of them. This is because they do not take cleaners seriously.</p>

<p>Company</p>	<p>Makhanane likes her job and cleaning because it also teaches her to be hygienic. She likes to clean, even when she is at her home.</p> <p>“There is nothing <i>Lerato</i> does not like about cleaning.”</p> <p><i>Makhanane will change the cleaner's salaries, give them better salaries, and make sure cleaners have the equipment to clean. The company can uplift cleaners to give them a learnership, show them how to write. Some cleaners do not know how to complete a form. The employer must teach them to improve their lives because some of them only 'know a mop'.</i></p>
<p>Life outside work</p> <p>Men</p>	<p>Makhanane does not have a boyfriend.</p> <p>She does not know happiness; she said her life is so hard.</p> <p>Her boyfriend went to Kenya on 4 September 2018 and he never came back and now she does not want a boyfriend.</p> <p>She lives with her mom in an RDP house in Atteridgeville. There are six people living in the house. Makhanane also looks after her sister's child and her child.</p> <p>Makhanane's mom and sister are her support base.</p> <p>Dreams for the Future: A better job, better salary, also get a husband and get married. She asked why she can't get happiness like other people.</p> <p>She does not know how to better her life because she tries to sell fruit for a second income but it is not going well. People are not always buying fruit and the fruit goes off.</p> <p>She described herself as a hard worker, she doesn't have friends, she is a loner and her sister is her friend. She likes to talk at staff meetings but does not like to talk where people are socialising.</p> <p>Her supervisor would describe her as “talkative and somebody who asks many questions”.</p> <p>What she likes about herself is that she is a proud person. She does not drink, go to parties, or smoke or fight with others. She likes to live a clean life. There is nothing she would like to change about herself.</p> <p>Makhanane feels bad as a mother because her son does not have a job. My son studied for a mechanical engineer but did not find a job. She said that he is starting to behave badly because he cannot find a job. She said he was so disciplined when he was in school and when he studied.</p>

Financial situation	<p>Salary for full month = ZAR 3 800 + ZAR 350 team leader's allowance Mom gets a SASSA grant. Sister's children receive child grants. Expenses: Taxi = ZAR 1 100 pm Mom helps her with stokvel and groceries with her SASSA grant. The employer can uplift her to give her a post as a receptionist and access courses. Makhanane can uplift herself to save money, study, and become a receptionist. Govt could help her study with free courses to uplift herself. Makhanane said she is willing to go to school in the evenings after work.</p>
Notes:	<p>Makhanane kept saying, "<i>Life is tough...life is tough</i>" throughout her interview.</p>

Participant 19: Patience (Interviewed 17 April 2021)

<p>What was her life like when she grew up?</p>	<p>Patience grew up in Villiers in the Free State. She stayed with her mom and stepdad. Both of them were petrol attendants. Patience does not know her dad. They were 7 people in the house: Herself, her mom and stepdad, 2 brothers, and 2 sisters. She said she did not have a happy childhood.</p>
<p>Education and learning after school</p>	<p>Patience completed Grade 12. She completed a computer course after school, she wanted to learn more about typing. She was looking after children before she became a cleaner. Her dream job is to be a lawyer or a policewoman because they earn good salaries. To get closer to her dream, she can save money. She said she always saves money and puts it in the bank, even if she does not earn a big salary.</p>
<p>Life at work</p>	<p>Patience is 53, a supervisor, and 16 years with the Company. She started as a cleaner (6 yrs.), then became a Team Leader (3 to 4 years) and has been a Supervisor for 6 yrs. Patience now wants to become a site manager, she said she knows it is not easy but, with the mercy of God, she can do it. Patience said cleaning helped her be independent, not counting on a man for money. She said she could speak to Tinka, her manager, about her problem. She loves her cleaning job because you can grow as a cleaner, you find mentors, you get wisdom, and she loves to clean. Patience knows that her employer provides training, and cleaners can attend. Patience does not have any other income. She works from Monday to Friday and then overtime during weekends. She advises other cleaners: To tell them not to be cleaners for a long time, they must work hard and save money.</p>

	<p>Patience’s advice to Supercare is to get resources and equipment for the cleaners. Give awards to cleaners, for example, ZAR 250 pm for good work or in December months give the employees a braai to thank them. Acknowledge/recognise good performance, for example, every month for hard work and respect them. Giving a certificate for good work and awards will motivate the cleaners. Employers must give employees a spirit not to give up. Patience said she is working with her cleaners, even though she is a supervisor. She earns respect with the cleaners when she works with them.</p>
<p>Life outside work</p> <p>Men</p>	<p>Patience has been married since 1995, and her husband is in the Airforce. They live in Atteridgeville in a house with their daughter. Patience’s son passed away in 2012. He was only 16 years old when he was in an accident. Patience's daughter is 17 years old and in Grade 12 at Cornerstone Christian School. She wanted to be a medical doctor and was accepted at Free State University. Dreams for the future: Patience says whatever she does is for her daughter. She wants the best for her daughter. She does not dream about a car. She only wants her daughter to study and get a qualification. Patience said that if it were not for Supercare, she would not survive. She has much stress at home with her husband and marriage. She said if her daughter goes to university next year, she permanently wants to work the night shift. She has a terrible marriage and wants to work 7 days a week. Patience said many cleaners go to the street to be prostitutes because the money they earn is too little. Her support base: Her spiritual “father” at church, Tinka, and she prays.</p>
<p>Financial situation</p>	<p>Basic salary = ZAR 5 600 pm, with the overtime she sometimes takes home = ZAR 10 100 pm. She believes that if you work hard, you will earn money. Her salary is also to help other people. She “adopted” three cleaners at work and supports them financially. She goes to Ackermans to buy stuff for them. Patience said she did not get love from her family when she was a child. Now when she sees somebody suffering, her childhood pain comes back. She does not like to see people suffer.</p>

	<p>Govt can uplift cleaners by taking them seriously and making them a priority. The world will be a disaster without cleaners. Govt can help cleaners with finances for medical aid and pension and give cleaners opportunities.</p> <p>Supercare can uplift cleaners by training, showing them how to write, and giving them bursaries or sending them to school. Show them how to be leaders because they must be managers, but they do not know how to be leaders.</p> <p>Send cleaners to universities/schools.</p>
Notes:	

Participant 20: Rose (Interviewed 17 April 2021)

<p>What was her life like when she grew up?</p>	<p>Rose grew up in Soweto with her dad and two sisters. Her mom passed away when she was 5 years old. She said it was difficult and so hard without her mom. Her sisters tried their best to help her because she was scared to ask her dad for something. They were 3 sisters, and one sister passed away.</p>
<p>Education and learning after school</p>	<p>Rose completed Grade 8. She said it was very hard without her mom, and there was a stepmom at home who treated them very badly. She did not complete any courses after school. She now attends Health and Safety and higher-level training.</p>
<p>Life at work</p>	<p>Rose works at Edenvale Private Clinic. She is a team leader and said it is hard to work with the younger cleaners. Rose started working at age 21. She was a machine packer at a Plastic Company. In 2011 she started with Supercare. 10 years – cleaner for 17 years. She enjoys her work and can handle everything. “Because it is my gift from God, I enjoy it”. Rose said there is a high risk for them at the hospital with Covid-19, but they give their best. Her dream job: Policewoman She likes to work with people and talks and helps them when they have problems. Eva [a pilot study participant] will say about Rose: “Hardworking with a very clean place.” What she likes about her job: It is nice to keep places clean and learn about hygiene because you can also teach your children. What she does not like about cleaning: “People mess, and you must be strong to clean, and people pass in front of you.” Rose advises Supercare to uplift cleaners: Give some form of award for hard workers, for example, a better offer/promotion. Also, give opportunities for younger cleaners to study because they cannot afford to study. Rose said it is difficult for her without Grade 12. She wants to be a manager, but without Grade 12 she cannot become a manager. Instead, she wants to become a supervisor.</p>
<p>Life outside work</p>	<p>Rose is 47 years old and has two children: a boy, 31 years old, and her girl is 13 years old.</p>

<p>Men</p>	<p>Rose is a single parent and stays with her two children in a house she bought with a bond. Rose’s son had a learnership at Langlaagte College, where he passed Levels 1 and 2 but failed Level 3. <i>“The son for me is not working, he struggles, and he is having ... I am a granny. He is having three children. Yes, yes three different Mothers, so, I take care of, sometimes you see, I must give them something, that money for grant is not helping them, you see. Yeah, so, it is hard, because I know sometimes if maybe even if they can give me study.”</i> Rose’s dad passed away in 2017. Her sister is a cleaner at Truworths in Germiston. Dreams: She wants to see herself “far” She tried to attend night school, but it was hard to work, attend night school, and take care of her younger child. Rose said she always tells her son to go to school and learn. What Rose likes most about herself: She is fair, communicates well, and is very friendly. She works with her cleaners, is not scared to work, and does not pretend. Rose said she teaches her children to work hard for what they want. She always says everything is going to be ok if you have that trust.</p>
<p>Financial situation</p>	<p>Salary = ZAR 4 210 pm. She works overtime to earn extra income. Rose said her salary is much better now, so she is happy. Her daughter gets a SASSA grant. Expenses: Loan African Bank. Transport: ZAR 1 500 pm, if she works on weekends, it is more. Their overtime working hours were reduced due to Covid. She and her sister bake for funerals to earn extra income. Her sister wants to open her own catering business. Government can uplift cleaners: Give extra money for survival. Help for cleaners’ children to attend school, assist them with bursaries, better opportunities for cleaners’ children. Supercare can uplift cleaners: <i>“Like give him a better offer, give him a better promotion, like, you know, like “now, nê”, with my team, I am having the younger, younger, and they are so good, and you can see them, they want to go far, you see, like I think they must give him that opportunity for study and like... I like it because when Eva told me about this thing, and he just give me some brief, I just code those, the one they are twenty-five, the one they are twenty-six, and you can see them, they want to go far because of what they cannot with their parents but if, maybe, Super Care they can assist us with those things, I think it would be much better.”</i></p>

	Cleaners can uplift themselves: Work hard (Rose gives in-service training to her cleaners). They must be willing to learn. Cleaners are willing to study while they work. They need their salary, but they need the training to improve themselves.
Notes:	Rose said she has a medical condition, but she still works hard. <i>"It is hard!"</i>

Participant 21: Thandiwe (Interviewed 17 April 2021)	
What was her life like when she grew up?	Thandiwe <i>grew up in Hillbrow with her parents</i> . Her mom was a housekeeper, and her dad a security officer. 25 years old. Thandiwe is number five of seven children.
Education and learning after school	She completed Grade 12 at Rand Girls High. She studied at Central Johannesburg College and passed Level 4 of the Hospitality and Catering course but did not complete her in-work training. NSFAS paid for her studies.
Life at work	<p>Thandiwe has worked for Supercare since June 2020. She is a temp worker and works at Medicross Edenvale. It is her only job. She attended chemical training at Supercare. Previously worked at Wanderers Hotel – Laid off due to Covid-19. Dream job: Social worker. She wants to help people. She thinks if she attends night class, she can reach her dream and get money to pay for her studies and take care of her two kids. She would love to attend more training at Supercare. Thandiwe tells some of her friends that she is a cleaner, but she is too shy to tell some of her friends. Therefore, she chooses whom she tells what because cleaners are undermined. <i>She became a cleaner because “you rather get up and get dirty to get to your goal”.</i> Expectations from employers: They must do job rotation. She gets bored easily and does not want to do the same thing every day. Thandiwe tried to cook for people as a 2nd job, but it did not work. Due to Covid people were scared to buy food from her. Advice to Supercare: They must come to the site and see how we are treated. We work long hours with a small salary. Promote people, and they must look at people’s skills and move them into open positions. What she likes about her job is that she can meet different people. What she does not like about her job is the long working hours, the bad treatment from people, and she is scared of blood. Also, it is not nice to flush a toilet for somebody else. Govt can uplift me: To assist me in getting to the next level. Thandiwe does not want to depend on Govt because they have already helped her with her studies. Govt should give cleaners more opportunities, open up jobs for them, enhance the cleaning industry, and pay cleaners better salaries. She said they flush toilets</p>

Financial situation	Salary depends on the days she works. ZAR 4 200 pm if she works a full month. Expenses: Parents do not work and she supports them and her children. Transport: Rent: ZAR 2 000 excluding water and electricity. She does not have money for herself. She said she will rather starve herself to make sure her kids are ok. SASSA grants for two children. Sometimes she does not have money to pay rent and then she speaks to the caretaker. Her friend staying with her does not have money to contribute anything.
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Participant 22: Clody (Interviewed 17 April 2021)

<p>What was her life like when she grew up?</p>	<p>Clody grew up in Tzaneen in Limpopo with her parents. Mom is 59 years old and unemployed. Dad was a Machine Operator at City Park Municipality. He was cutting grass at parks and schools. They were six children, 4 girls and 2 boys, and Clody is the last born. They were 8 people in total who stayed in the house.</p>
<p>Education and learning after school</p>	<p>Completed Grade 12 at Sevwengwana High School, Limpopo and completed N6 in Electrical Engineering at Central Johannesburg College. Her dream job is to have her own business. She wants to be an entrepreneur, a business owner. She is a hard worker and wants to open a catering business. Clody needs money to buy equipment to open her own company, and she needs time. She applied everywhere for posts to do her practical: Eskom, Transnet.</p>
<p>Life at work</p>	<p>Clody has worked at Supercare for 9 months now. Clody attended a cleaning course at Supercare. She works at Hyundai Bedfordview. She tells her friend that she is a cleaner, she is not shy. She likes cleaning because she gains experience, protects people to clean places, and teaches her hygiene. So, cleaning is an important job for her. She likes everything about cleaning, nothing she does not like. Advice to Supercare: There is nothing she wants to tell them. Cleaners excel in their jobs and are doing very well.</p>
<p>Life outside work</p>	<p>Clody has a boyfriend; he is an Uber driver, and they do not live together. She rents a room for ZAR 850 pm. Dreams for her future: She wants to be a Qualified Electrical Engineer; she wants to be the boss of a catering business and employ people to help them with jobs. Her supervisor will describe her as energetic. She concentrates on her job and is a hard worker. She likes herself because she loves herself, likes a clean environment, and loves to look beautiful. She likes everything about herself, and she does not like it when her friends drink alcohol.</p>

	<p>Cody is a Christian and likes to read her Bible.</p> <p>What does Cody think about older cleaners: She said you do not have to choose a job. You can take any job. You will never know what God planned for you, and she would take any opportunity to earn a salary and not burden her parents.</p> <p>Her fellow cleaners are happy people. They enjoy their jobs and do not complain. They teach their kids to clean and be hygienic as well.</p>
Financial situation	<p>Salary = ZAR 3 870 per month</p> <p>Her money is for herself. Sometimes she gives her mom some pocket money.</p> <p>Govt can uplift the cleaners: Create more jobs, especially for those not mentally gifted but gifted practically. They must pay more attention to cleaners because they do not take cleaners seriously. They must educate people not to litter and throw down things.</p> <p>Supercare can uplift cleaners: They cannot take someone from High School and make them supervisors. People who have been long in the same job have the experience to be supervisors. In the cleaning industry, you must not make the youngsters with qualifications supervisors but make the ones with the supervisors' experience.</p> <p>Give training to cleaners and promote them to the next level, for example, team leader or supervisor.</p>
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Pilot interview: Eva (Interviewed 12 February 2021)

<p>What was her life like when she grew up?</p>	<p>She grew up in Makapanstad in Hammanskraal and stayed with her father and grandfather. Her mom died when Eva went to school. Father worked at Ellerines as a salesperson and her granddad at the Bank. They were 3 children, little brother stayed with her, her dad and granddad, and her other brother stayed with her mother's family. They were 4 in the house where she grew up.</p>
<p>Education and learning after school</p>	<p>Grade 12 completed in Cullinan. Eva completed a Business Management Course, has a driver's licence, and did a computer course. She also completed the Hygiene basic cleaning course. Eva was a waitress before she joined Supercare. She had to walk from Brooklyn to Hillcrest for her waitress job and earned ZAR 400 pm. Current training: Deep cleaning bathrooms/theatres. Eva will love to do First-Aid training. She said it is easy for cleaners to attend training in the Company. They must just be willing to learn, willing to go the extra mile. She learned to drive at Supercare and said she learned so much at Supercare. This is her home. Eva thinks cleaning is a professional job. You do not have to be ashamed, do your job with pride. Be proud of your work and the job you have. The world needs cleaners and cleaners have an important job. People must accept it as a professional job.</p>
<p>Life at work</p>	<p>Eva started at Supercare in 2005. She was a team leader at Woolworths Centurion and was excellent at her job. Dream job: To be a trainer. She wants to train people and likes to interact with people. She likes to clean with other people. We need to let people feel they are important and tell them to be proud of what they do. Eva has meetings with her cleaners to find out how they are doing. She is now a manager at Supercare, her only job.</p>

	<p>She likes her job as a manager because she knows how to handle people. She knows their attitudes, tries to understand people, wants to get to the root of the problem, listens to people, tries to understand their problems, and finds solutions for problems.</p> <p>What she does not like about her job as a manager is that she does not want to be called a Boss lady but a “helper.”</p> <p>Eva does not like the way cleaners are being treated at work. Change, for example, the “cleaners’ room” to “the staff room”.</p> <p>Cleaners are excluded from parties and functions, and they are treated differently. She hates that.</p>
Life outside work	<p>Married for 11 years. Husband is an operator at Thabazimbi mine. He only comes home one or two times per month. She lives in a house in Olifantsfontein in Thembisa Brother stays with Eva and her husband. Eva’s two children stay with her mom-in-law in Venda. Girl (7) – Will do something in art one day, very creative. Girl (4) – She will be a lawyer because she has an explanation for everything.</p>
Financial situation	<p>She uses her salary for herself, mom in law, grandmother, and her two children. Her husband is her support structure. Dreams: To help women get out of the “gutter” and get them a job. Wants to help women to be independent. Eva wants to inspire women to get a job, earn a salary, and look after themselves. She does not receive SASSA grants for the girls.</p> <p>The company can do for cleaners: Give them information about vacant posts in the Company. Find out what qualification’s cleaners have to put them in a better position. Counselling sessions for the women. Cleaners earn a minimum wage, too little to survive if you have children, transport, rent, and food. What must happen for the Company to pay cleaners more: Eva looks at the Temp profile of the company when they hire permanent staff. Temps are paid the average hours. She hopes for more contracts to hire temps. Govt must help to give better salaries to cleaners.</p>

	<p>What would we do as an Employer of choice: Treatment of people treat people well. Supercare treats its people very well. We must give the cleaners a good attitude/treatment.</p> <p>Temps: Supercare has lots of temps. Most temps have a month-to-month contract. If a contract opens, we normally appoint temps. Temps receive no provident fund, no benefits, no bonus.</p>
Notes:	

Pilot interview: Cynthia (Interviewed 12 February 2021)	
What was her life like when she grew up?	<p>Cynthia grew up in Mokopane Limpopo with her mom and dad. Mom and dad divorced in 2002. Her mom was a housewife then but recently a domestic worker in Cape Town. Cynthia's dad is a police officer. Dad re-married, and Cynthia and her siblings lived with her grandmother and grandfather in Limpopo. 5 Siblings, including Cynthia and grandparents= Total of 7 in the house</p>
Education and learning after school	<p>2007 Grade 11. Fell pregnant and left school. 2020 she finished her Grade 2. She completed a computer literacy course and loves to work with computers. Her dream job is to become an Optometrist. To reach her dream, she will have to get a bursary, or somebody will take care of her expenses. Cynthia attended health and safety courses at work. She will find out from the training department what courses they present.</p>
Life at work	<p>Cynthia is currently a payroll filing clerk 2016 she started working at Supercare She sells Tupperware and is doing very well with the selling of products.</p> <p>What Cynthia will change at Supercare: She said people are taking advantage of cleaners; they are not taken seriously. As a result, cleaners are undermined, and it is painful to see how cleaners are being treated. Cleaners are doing a good and important job. Cynthia said cleaners are colleagues. What she will change is to give better salaries to cleaners.</p>

	<p>Govt can give better salaries and create job opportunities for cleaners.</p> <p>Govt can give a tender to create job opportunities.</p>
Life outside work	<p>Cynthia has a boyfriend, and they live together. They have been a couple for 8 years.</p> <p>They stay in Ivory Park with her 14-year-old daughter. The boyfriend is not her daughter's father.</p> <p>Cynthia's daughter is doing very well at school and wants to be a doctor.</p> <p>Cynthia said that she would have studied further if she did not fall pregnant.</p> <p>Future dreams: She wants to be on top at Payroll.</p> <p>Describes herself as someone who loves spending time with family and friends. In addition, she loves to help and support other people.</p> <p>What she does not like about herself: she is naughty and sometimes eats too much and gets angry.</p>
Financial situation	<p>Her salary only increased a little bit from cleaner to filing clerk.</p> <p>She said it is hard to get a bonus or an increase because she also needs to support her family in Limpopo.</p> <p>Sometimes she sends money to Limpopo.</p>
Notes:	

Appendix G:
Da Vinci Institute Ethics Committee Approval Letter