

Understanding the effectiveness of Social Impact Assessment (SIA): perspectives from South African SIA practitioners

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their needs. It is based on three pillars of sustainability: economic; environmental and social sustainability. Sustainable development principle has shifted and brought balance between the biophysical, economic and social impacts during development of projects. As such, it is important to gain an in-depth knowledge of the tool used to assess the social impacts during projects' development. The tool used to assess social impacts is called Social Impact Assessment (SIA). SIA is a process of identifying and managing social impacts during the development of projects. However, SIA in South Africa is still seen as "less important" in comparison to Environmental Impact assessment (EIA). In order to understand why SIA is still seen as "less important", this study will probe the perspectives of SIA practitioners to understand their view on the effectiveness of SIA practice in South Africa. The research study had two research objectives; the first research objective is to understand the fundamental purpose and objectives of SIA; and the second research objective is to understand the effectiveness of SIA from the perspectives of South African SIA practitioners.

In this study a qualitative research approach is used to explore the existing literature of SIA in South Africa and internationally to identify the existing gaps on SIA effectiveness. For the empirical investigation, data was collected through a self-administered questionnaire from a sample of 18 SIA practitioners in South Africa. The questionnaire sent to the SIA practitioners were comprised of two sections, Section A was about the SIA practitioners' background and Section B was about SIA effectiveness in South Africa. The data was analysed using a qualitative research methodology approach. In this study three themes emerged from the feedback received from the SIA practitioners. The three themes are SIA practice (Theme 1), SIA effectiveness (Theme 2) and SIA improvement (Theme 3). The research findings for Theme 1 indicated that SIA has a potential to be an effective tool in South Africa provided it is used as a management tool and not used as a regulatory tool as it is currently done. In Theme 2, the lack of a formal training for SIA practitioners and lack of a regulatory body for the SIA practitioners were identified as the obstacles in achieving quality SIA reports (in turn, SIA effectiveness) that complies with the international SIA best practices. And for Theme 3, the participants recommended that a regulatory body should be developed that will manage and monitor SIA practitioners, an introduction of a formal SIA training and peer review of reports, especially of the new practitioners.

Keywords: Social Impact Assessment (SIA); effectiveness; South Africa; perspectives; practitioners.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BA	Bachelor of Arts
BSc	Bachelor of Science
COVID-19	2019 novel coronavirus
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
EA	Environmental Assessment
EAP	Environmental Assessment Practitioner
ECA	Environmental Conservation Act
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EMP	Environmental Management Plan
EMRG	Environmental Management Research Group
FPIC	Free Prior Informed Consent
I&AP	Interested and Affected Parties
IA	Impact Assessment
IAIA	International Association of Impact Assessment
IAPA	International Association of Impact Appraisal
MA	Masters of Arts
MCHS	Masters in Chemical and Historic Sciences
MPRDA	Mineral Petroleum Resources Development Act
MSc	Masters of Science
NEMA	National Environmental Management Act
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act

NGO	Non-government organisation
NWU	North-West University
NWU-IR	North-West University Institute Repository
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PP	Public Participation
PTP	Participant
Q	Question
QDAS	Qualitative Data Analysis Software
RO	Research Objective
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SIA	Social Impact Assessment
SLO	Social License to Operate
SLP	Social Labour Plans
SMMP	Social Monitoring Management Plan
SPSS	Software Package for Social Scientists
TA	Thematic Analysis
UN	United Nations
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
USA	United States of America
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The concept of 'sustainable development' is referred to as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED, 1987:8). This idea of developing sustainably was first discussed at the United Nations (UN) Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm in 1972, however the term was only defined and popularised 15 years later at the World Commission on Environment and Development, popularly named Our Common Future (WCED, 1987:6). The main goal of sustainable development is to resolve the conflict between economic development and environmental protection by subjecting major projects through public scrutiny or involvement (Sadler and Jacobs, 1990). Devuyst (2000) stated that one of the potential ways to promote sustainable development is through impact assessment. In 1992, 117 heads of states and 178 representatives from 178 countries held a conference called The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (UNCED, 1992). The aim of the conference was to rethink economic growth, ensure environmental growth and advance social equity. The Stockholm conference in 1972 and the Rio de Janeiro conference in 1992, adopted 27 principles and recommendations that will guide environmental protection activities of the United Nations and their individual states (Momtaz, 1996:261). Principle 17 of the Rio principles states that "environmental impact assessment (EIA) as a national instrument, shall be undertaken to proposed activities that are likely to have a significant impact on the environment and are subject to a decision of a competent national authority" (Declaration, 1992:12). EIA is a tool required to achieve sustainable development. For this reason the following section will introduce EIA as an impact assessment tool and its development.

1.2 Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

The development of EIA internationally started with the promulgation of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 of the United States of America (USA) which aimed to "declare a national policy that will promote efforts which will eliminate damage to the environment and biosphere and stimulate the health and welfare of a man" (NEPA, 1969:6). Caldwell (1988:75) states that EIA was designed to reform priorities and procedures in federal policy-making with major environmental implications. The International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA) defines EIA as a "process of identifying, analysing and mitigating the biophysical and social impacts of proposed development projects" (IAIA, 1999:5). Glasson *et al.*

(2005) described EIA as a multi-purpose tool that aids in decision-making by providing an overall assessment of the environmental implications of a proposed action before that decision is taken. They further described EIA as a tool that aids in the formulation of development actions in that it encourages the consideration of environmental impacts early in the planning cycle and that it minimizes the adverse impacts on the environment. Sadler (1996) agreed with Glasson *et al.* (2005) that EIA is a tool for sustainable development and can be used in mitigating the harmful effects of development early in the planning stage. Besides its informative role, EIA is also meant to assess and recommend alternative methods of approach that can help in mitigating the negative impacts that development projects might hold (Du Pisani, 2006).

1.2.1 Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in a South African context

South Africa went through a dark cloud called the “Apartheid regime” during which that time EIA was practiced on a non-mandatory basis, and was only conducted on a voluntary basis (Du Pisani and Sandham, 2006:720). This meant that projects that had major negative impacts on both the environment and poor communities were not regulated, leaving vulnerable communities to bear the brunt of environmental pollution and degradation (DEAT, 2005). The adoption of the Environmental Conservation Act No. 73 of 1989 (ECA), provided the Minister of Environmental Affairs with the power to identify projects that may have negative impacts on the environment to conduct EIAs in order to ensure sustainable development.

After South Africa gained its independency in 1994, the approach of Environmental Management (EM) transformed in a positive way (Du Pisani and Sandham, 2006:721). South Africa developed a new constitutional order in the Bill of Rights (Chapter 2, Section 24) that shines the light on the rights of South Africans and their right to a protected environment by stating that “everyone has the right to an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being, and have a right to the environment protected, for the benefit of the present and future generations, through reasonable legislative and other measures that prevent pollution and ecological degradation; promote conservation and secure ecologically sustainable development and use of natural resources while promoting justifiable economic and social development” (RSA, 1996:1245). In order for South Africa to comply with the Bill of Rights, the first comprehensive environmental management legislation of the newly democratically elected South African government adopted the National Environmental Management Act No. 107 of 1998 (NEMA) in the late 1990s. EIA was formally adopted and practised in South Africa in 1997, when the first set of EIA regulations were published in the Government Gazette (Notice 40772). This meant that all activities that were listed under Section 21 of the ECA, were now governed

according to the new EIA regulations. All those activities were then listed and published as per government protocols (RSA, 1996). Vanclay (2002) stated that if impact assessments are carried out properly, it will shape the process of decision-making to ensure that due regard is given to the context in which the decision is made. For the implementation of NEMA to be practicable, the interrelationship of humans with their environment was highlighted in the definition of the word 'environment'. NEMA has a stronger social focus than the ECA, because of its very broad definition of the word 'environment' included in the Act, which includes and integrates people as inherent to the environment (Du Pisani and Sandham, 2006; Kruger and Sandham, 2020). Hence, Social Impact Assessment (SIA) has developed alongside EIA globally, following the promulgation of NEPA in 1969 (Momtaz, 2005; Kruger and Sandham, 2018). Hildebrandt (2012) elaborated that the full incorporation of SIA into EIA in South Africa is due to the definition of the 'environment' included in the NEMA. Du Pisani and Sandham (2006:712) adds that the reason for this integration of SIA into EIA is because in a developing country like South Africa, it is difficult to separate environmental issues and social development. More information regarding the theoretical development of SIA within EIA and the definition SIA is given in more detail in Section 1.3 below.

1.3 Social Impact Assessment (SIA)

There are various definitions for Social Impact Assessment (SIA) that exist from different authors based on their knowledge and understanding of SIA. The International Principles for Social Impact Assessment (SIA) best defines SIA as “the processes of analysing, monitoring and managing the intended and unintended social consequences, both positive and negative, of planned interventions (policies, programs, plans, projects) and any social change processes invoked by those interventions” (IAIA, 2003:5). In this study the definition provided by the IAIA will be used.

According to Esteves *et al.*, (2012), contemporary SIA started with EIA in the early 1970s in response to the formal requirements of the NEPA. Burdge (2004) concurs and stated that SIA originated in the 1970s with the establishment of the NEPA of 1969 in the USA, however authors like Vanclay (1999) and Becker (1997) argued that SIA existed long before NEPA, but SIA still remained an integral component of EIA. SIA assesses the impact of proposed projects on people, which can also be termed “*putting the people first*”, which was the first principle of the 1992 Agenda 21, in the Rio Declaration, Brazil.

1.3.1 Social Impact Assessment in a South African context

As mentioned in the previous section that SIA is a sub tool of EIA, which means that SIA is only conducted under the directive of government as part of EIA (Du Pisani and Sandham, 2006:712). Aucamp (2015:55) said that SIA in South Africa will remain an aspiration as long as it is still conducted as a once-off assessment under EIA. Aucamp and Lombard (2018) concurs that despite improvements in SIA practice over time, SIA still remains neglected under EIA. Sandham *et al.* (2013:1) says that the report quality is the main component of effectiveness, meaning a poor report can contribute to ineffectiveness. Hildebrandt and Sandham (2014:24) tested this link of SIA report quality to effectiveness by reviewing the quality of a sample of SIA reports produced in South Africa. The findings from their study confirmed that SIA is neglected in South Africa when the EIA is performed. Their findings also shows that the main cause for negligent SIA reporting in South Africa is a lack of trained and skilled SIA specialists combined with a lack of a flexible methodological guidance. SIA effectiveness and reporting in South Africa has received limited amount of attention except when it is used as a measure of effectiveness through the quality of SIA reports.

1.4 Problem statement and rationale for the study

The effectiveness of EIA in South Africa has been investigated in recent years and it was mostly done by reviewing the quality of EIA reports (Sandham and Pretorius, 2008). Sadler (1996) argues that the investigations on the effectiveness of EIA have also led to the effectiveness of SIA been scrutinized. Cashmore *et al.*, (2004) states that globally, debates about the effectiveness of Environmental Assessment and likewise, are concerned with criticisms around the effectiveness of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). Sadler (1996:37) refers to the term 'effectiveness' as "whether something works as intended and meets the purpose(s) for which it was designed". Sadler (1996) further refers to the 'litmus test' for effectiveness which is a test to determine whether environmental objectives were reached and subsequently whether better decision-making took place. O'Faircheallaigh (2009) added that effectiveness refers to when the mitigating controls are implemented and managed in a systematic manner.

In order to understand the nature of SIA effectiveness, the wider literature of EIA effectiveness needs to be consulted because of limited writings on SIA (O'Faircheallaigh, 2009). It is important that this study determine the effectiveness of SIA and whether it achieve its main objectives. In South Africa, the study done by Hildebrandt and Sandham (2014) concurs with Aucamp *et al.* (2011) that SIA should go beyond the minimum requirements, and that if SIA

achieves its objectives, it could potentially improve the 'lesser sibling' status of SIA. Therefore, the aim of this research study is to investigate whether SIA is effective and achieving what it is set out to achieve, through the perspectives from South African SIA practitioners.

1.5 Research aim and objectives

The main objectives of this study are to understand the effectiveness of SIA in South Africa and to check if SIA is working the way it is intended, and if SIA achieved its objective "to bring about a more sustainable and equitable biophysical and human environment" (Vanclay, 2003:6). In order to achieve this, the following two research objectives are set:

- To understand the fundamental purpose and objectives of SIA; and
- To understand the effectiveness of SIA from the perspectives of South African SIA practitioners.

1.6 Overview of research methodology

Maree (2016) states that there are four methods of research methodology that can be used when conducting researches, i.e. mixed approach; multimethod approach; qualitative and quantitative approach. Each methodology have its advantages and disadvantages. In this study, a qualitative research approach will be followed. In order to reach the first research objective of this study as set out in Section 1.5, an in-depth literature review will be conducted and it is presented in Chapter 2. The second research objective pertaining to this study (presented as Chapter 4), is achieved by data collected through the utilisation of a structured questionnaire, consisting of closed and open-ended questions, presented in Annexure A. The research questionnaire in Annexure A were sent to a total of 72 South African SIA practitioners with knowledge and experience in SIA practice to self-administer, however only a final sample of 18 SIA practitioners responded, which made the sample of this study. Once the feedback was received from the participant's, a thematic analysis methodology was used to analyse the data.

1.7 Structure and outline of the dissertation

This mini-dissertation consists of five (5) chapters. This section covers the chapter layout of this research study and provides a short discussion of what can be expected in each chapter.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The chapter introduced the concept of sustainable development and the instruments required to achieve sustainable development. This chapter further discussed the research problem and provided a brief overview of the research methodology that is followed in this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The chapter highlights the value of SIA and SIA best practice. The chapter discusses the SIA principle tasks that need to be practised holistically to ensure that SIA in South Africa is on an international level. The chapter puts special focus on SIA effectiveness and its measures and also reviews the existing literature on SIA effectiveness globally. Lastly, Chapter 2 investigates problems related to SIA effectiveness and opportunities of improving SIA effectiveness. This chapter also provide more information required to answer Research Objective 1 (RO1).

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This chapter documents the research design and methodology followed during the data collection used in this study. In this chapter the chosen research approach is provided and the reasons why the approach was chosen. The chapter also discuss the sample design and provides the full details of the data collection process, data analysis, including an abbreviated questionnaire sample.

Chapter 4: Research findings and data analysis

In order to answer Research Objective 2 (RO2), this chapter demonstrate the research findings and analyse feedback from the questionnaires that were sent to the SIA practitioners and comparing it with the findings from the literature. This chapter describes and summarises the results obtained using figures and tables. The chapter demonstrates data patterns, and draw conclusions by interpreting the research findings.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and recommendations

Chapter 5 demonstrates how the research findings relate to the literature review and theory as discussed in Chapter 2. This chapter further concludes the study by summarizing the research findings and provide recommendations for future research and practice.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Chapter 1 introduced and discussed the concept of sustainable development, along with the concepts of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Social Impact Assessment (SIA). The chapter further highlighted the origins and development of both EIA and SIA internationally and locally. Chapter 1 further introduced the problem statement and outlined the structure of this research study. In order to attain the aim of this study and also Research Objective 1, which is to understand the effectiveness of SIA through the perspectives of South African SIA practitioners; and to understand the purpose and objectives of SIA, this chapter (Chapter 2) reviews the existing literature on SIA best practice and SIA effectiveness. This chapter first provides a detailed discussion on the value of SIA and then look at SIA best practice in line with the principles and tasks of SIA, then discusses the international best practice of SIA and then, compare the status of best practice of SIA internationally to the South African practice. This chapter lastly discusses measuring effectiveness and looks at the status of SIA effectiveness using available literature relating to the effectiveness of EIA and SIA internationally as well as in South Africa.

2.2 The value of Social Impact Assessment (SIA)

According to Du Pisani (2006), Social Impact Assessment (SIA) is important because it helps the planners, the impacted population and decision-makers to understand the possible social consequences of the proposed project on humans (like health impacts, socio-economic impacts) and the environment (landscaping). Studies like Francis and Jacobs (1999:348) and Vanclay (1999:31) are in agreement about the importance of SIA and they indicated that SIA makes projects more inclusive by involving stakeholders; it makes projects more socially sound by minimising or mitigating adverse social impacts; it maximises social benefits and ensures that projects are designed to “fit” the populations to be reached; and that it is part of a democratic process in which equity, transparency and ownership are ensured through public participation. The Interorganizational Committee on Principles and Guidelines for SIA (2004:83), have indicated that SIA incorporates local values and knowledge into decision-making and helps decision-makers to identify the most beneficial course of action. In order to assess the value of SIA and the status of SIA effectiveness, it is important that SIA best practice is evaluated critically. In the absence of explicit SIA regulations, Section 2.3 will compare the practice of SIA in South Africa to the international best practice using the SIA principles.

2.3 SIA International Best Practice

The SIA report is no longer a document with a list of social impacts submitted to authorities to gain approval (Vanclay *et al.*, 2015:4). SIA reports are now recognized according to Esteves *et al.* (2012:34) as a field of research and a framework to manage the social issues associated with development. Vanclay *et al.* (2013) states that the international principles for SIA constitute the mostly recognized benchmark for effective SIA in the absence of an independent SIA regulation. This simply means for best practice of SIA, it is important to ensure that SIA is conducted fairly and with the intention to install the core values of the SIA principles mentioned in Section 2.3.1.

2.3.1 Core Values of SIA International Principles

Vanclay (2003:8) describes “the principles as statements which provide advice and direction by which to plan a specific course of action”. The principles were developed with the following core values as believed and strongly held by the SIA communities that these values will improve the state of SIA:

- ❖ Fundamental human rights equity across all cultures and genders;
- ❖ That the fundamental human rights are protected by law and ensure that those rights are applied equally, fairly and that they are also accessible to everyone;
- ❖ People are afforded their rights to work and live in a healthy environment that will promote quality life;
- ❖ People's health and quality of life is dependent on the environment's social dimensions;
- ❖ Communities have the right to take part in decision making of planned projects that are likely to impact their quality of life;
- ❖ Local communities' knowledge and experience may be valuable in order to enhance planned interventions (Vanclay, 2003:9).

Due to the social, cultural and political diversity in the world, SIA has developed and the extent of social impacts have expanded therefore, the SIA principles developed by IAIA in 1999 have since been reviewed. The principles have evolved and have now adopted tasks that are focusing more on social issues (Vanclay *et al.*, 2015:4). Vanclay *et al.* (2015:70) reiterates that the purpose of these tasks is to provide a definitive standard of good practice in SIA and recommends that the tasks should not be used as guidance to the SIA community only but, the

tasks should be used by the regulatory staff, NGOs and representatives of the affected communities. Table 2 -1 shows the SIA tasks as reviewed by Vanclay (2015:4). The SIA tasks as shown in Table 2 -1 are not meant to be actioned all at the same time, the SIA practitioners should action tasks that are applicable to their specific case.

Table 2-1: Tasks of Social Impact Assessment (Vanclay, 2015:5).

- “Undertake an ex-ante assessment of likely social impacts;
- Liaise with the EIA team (and any other assessment teams) to ensure that the social aspects of environmental and biodiversity impacts and the environmental and biodiversity impacts of social changes are considered in the impact assessments and management plans;
- Compile a community profile (i.e. a description of the local social context);
- Construct a social baseline relevant for decision-making and documenting social changes (i.e. collect data for key social variables to document the pre-impact state);
- Identify and implement changes to the project and undertake other actions to mitigate social impacts;
- Plan the resettlement and/or compensation for people who will experience economic displacement in instances where there is no alternative;
- Prepare a Resettlement Policy Framework, Resettlement Action Plan, Livelihood Restoration and Enhancement Plan and ensure that these are integrated into the project development plans and timeframes;
- Undertake human rights due diligence and human rights impact assessments, involving human rights experts as necessary
- Identify ways of enhancing the benefits of the project;
- Identify stakeholders, and map their interests, relationships, and potential two-way project-stakeholder impacts;
- Facilitate genuine community engagement processes consistent with the spirit of free, prior and informed consent;
- Where Indigenous communities are involved, assist in processes to comply with formal Free, Prior and Informed Consent requirements;
- Assist affected communities in understanding what the likely social impacts of a proposed project might mean for them;
- Enhance local content and local procurement arrangements;
- Monitor social issues;
- Design and implement social investment actions;
- Establish appropriate compensation mechanisms;
- Design and implement grievance mechanisms;
- Negotiate Impacts and Benefits Agreements;
- Develop Social Impact Management Plans;
- Prepare documentation for a regulatory authority;
- Identify issues and/or obligations for addressing the management of social impacts to be included in contracts with project subcontractors;
- Prepare performance standard compliance documentation for a financial institution (World Bank, IFC, another multilateral development bank, or an Equator Principles bank);
- Undertake a due diligence assessment or audit of social performance for a community, NGO or for a financial institution and;
- Assist in closure planning”.

2.4 SIA Internationally

Internationally, it has become a legal requirement for EIA to incorporate SIA to a greater extent (McCullough, 2016). In countries like Canada, SIA is not a mandatory requirement but in cases that affect indigenous people, it is sometimes conducted outside EIA (Ibenholt *et al.*, 2016). Whereas Hansen *et al.*, (2015) indicated that in Greenland, SIAs are a legal requirement for oil and mining companies, from the planning and exploration phases of the development.

2.5 SIA in South Africa

There is a gap in SIA literature in the South African context and this lead to the SIA practitioners in South Africa relying on the international SIA literature for guidance on best practice and emerging concepts to follow when conducting SIA (Aucamp, 2015:69). Hildebrandt and Sandham (2014:24) have mentioned that the new concepts as discussed in this section can be implemented and SIA in South Africa can be effective and move closer to attaining sustainable development. The new concept identified in Table 2 -1 will be discussed and more details will be provided and they will as applied in South African context:

- *Social License to Operate (SLO)* – refer to the approval or acceptance of the project by the local communities to continue (Vanclay, 2015:2). For example, this is like a bridge between the mining houses and the communities. Having an SLO means that the project has mitigated sufficient social impacts and it is a prerequisite for the projects sustainability (Lacey and Lamont, 2014:832). SLO originated from the mining sector, however lately SLO is spreading to other professions, industries and socio-political sectors and it has been identified that SLO is understood differently as it spreads (Boutilier, 2014). Vanclay (2015:2) states that large corporations have realized that they need more than the regulatory approval to commence with a project and they are now seeking SLO in order to avoid project disruptions like strikes, riots, reputational harm and the legal action and financial consequences from those actions. SLO is not mandatory in South Africa and the South African government is looking at formalising SLO to act as an issued consent from the local communities to the project developers (Matebesi and Marais, 2018:317). Since SLO is issued following the agreement on management of impacts between the mining houses and the communities, it can be used to hold the mining houses accountable when they are in contravention of the social impacts.
- *Impact and Benefit Agreement (IBA)* – refers to the privately negotiated agreements between indigenous communities and companies, without government involvement in

the negotiations (Du Pisani and Sandham, 2006; Vanclay *et al.*, 2015). Caine and Krogman (2010:80) described IBAs as agreements that establish formal relationships between signatories that mitigate negative development impacts and enhance positive impacts. Rio Tinto (2012) states that IBAs are the most notable ways of ensuring and verifying that a community has endorsed a proposed project. In the South African context, Social Labour Plans (SLPs) are the closest tool to the IBAs, and SLPs are a requirement from the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act 28 of 2002 (MPRDA) for the mining houses to establish and operate a mine. However, SLPs are confidential, they have vague guidelines and they are the property of the mines and their shortfalls lead to the contribution of the community development questionable and can be deemed not transparent (Andersson, 2010:31).

- *Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC)* – refers to a concept used to protect the human rights of indigenous people, whereby they are given an opportunity to decide whether or not to allow the project that affect their land and resources to continue since it was realised that many states failed to protect the rights of the indigenous people (Szablowski, 2012). This is not the case in South Africa because communities in South Africa are not homogenous, they are diverse and have different views and perspectives on matters of public interest (Smith *et al.*, in Aucamp 2015). Murombo (2013:45) states that corrupt officials may use the fact that communities in South Africa are heterogeneous to cause conflict between the communities and divide them further. Hanna and Vanclay (2013:148) indicated that from a legal perspective, FPIC is exclusively available for indigenous people and traditional people. However, some land in South Africa especially in the rural areas, is owned by the state and communities are given rights to use the land so should the state pronounce the project to be of national interest, state can override the rights of the communities and use the land without community approval (Murombo, 2013:45). FPIC is still not practised to its full capacity in South Africa because SIA in South Africa is governed by EIA legislation, and EIA legislation does not make provision for FPIC.
- *Social Impact Management Plans* – also referred to as social management and monitoring plans (SMMP), are a management tool used to address social impacts during planned interventions, projects, plans, programmes and policies and they provide a good opportunity to link project activities with local and regional planning (Franks and Vanclay, 2013:41). The common practice in SIA in the South African context, is for the social impacts to be included in the Environmental Management Plans (EMPs) report by the environmental assessment practitioner from the SIA report without involving the SIA practitioner, so the SIA practitioners have no influence on the outcome of the report. However, Franks and Vanclay (2013:41) says this is slowly changing because big

mining houses and corporates are adopting and requesting social action plans as the outcome of the SIA. Vanclay (2015:1) states that SIMP outlines the strategies that need to be undertaken at every phase of the project, including the post closure phase. Furthermore, Vanclay (2013:41) have indicated that monitoring and management of SIA is underrated and it is done as a once-off step during assessment. They have indicated that, if done correctly, monitoring and management can be used in closing a gap to a company's corporate social responsibility (CSR) practice. According to Aucamp (2015:82) the challenge with using SIMPs as part of the CSR in South Africa is that CSR is mostly done in-house while the SIA is done by an external consultant whose target is to meet regulatory requirements. Aucamp (2015:82) states that SIMPs are implementable in South Africa, however, they need to be conducted outside an EIA process as they are time consuming and require inputs from various stakeholders like the government, communities, and project leaders. In South Africa, SIA is incorporated in EIA.

Communication and agreements are the two central components to the above discussed SIA tasks. And, that is what will ensure that both parties, the developers and the communities, need to manage and monitor social impacts as per their agreements and ensure accountability and compliance.

2.6 Possible issues that can affect SIA effectiveness in practice

Existing literature shows that there are unqualified personnel conducting SIAs (Barrow, 2000; Hildebrandt, 2012) and SIA is conducted as a once-off assessment without proper follow-up or involvement of the SIA practitioner and these may deter SIA best practice (Suopajarvi, 2013:30). Carley and Bustelo (1984) warned that the integration of SIA into EIA may lead to SIA impacts treated superficially. This section look at some of the existing literature in order to assess if there is any truth in Carley and Bustelo's warnings.

(i) Who should conduct SIA?

In order to improve the SIA reports' quality, it is important to identify who is qualified to conduct SIAs. Barrow (2000) said SIA can be conducted by anyone who has been trained in a variety of social sciences. Sandham *et al.* (2005:59) and Hildebrandt (2012) highlighted that in practice, EIA consultants have a natural science qualification. A natural science qualification has minimum knowledge of social impacts and having EIA consultants conducting SIAs lead to non-specialists conducting and producing SIA reports that just meet the minimum requirements.

Barrow (2000) and IAPA (2003:7) said for SIA practice to improve, there must be a professional regulatory body that administer, accredit and monitor the practitioners, improve professional ethics and establish working standards.

(ii) Problems with the concept of what social impacts are:

Gramling and Freudenburg (1992:231) said SIA is meant to provide informed decision-making therefore it should involve a vast range of significant social impacts and not just the ones that are politically correct or easy to identify. SIA practitioners should have clear conceptual frameworks and proper knowledge of the conceptual frameworks.

(iii) Determining the significance of impacts:

Weighting of impacts is a crucial step of any impact assessment (Du Pisani and Sandham, 2006:725). However, there are some difficulties with quantifying other social impacts such as employment opportunities, source of income and population and these difficulties are causing a potential data miss-representation as data for these social impacts is presented mostly in tabular format, and this can hide their information value during decision making. Barrow (2000:66) indicated that this may lead to SIA recommendations less clear, concise and straightforward than recommendations of other assessments like EIA. It is important that each table/graph is followed by the discussion/interpretation to ensure that the results are not misunderstood. Vanclay (2019) states that in order to determine the significance of impacts, SIA practitioners' need to be advocates of the values and best practice of SIA.

(iv) The flexibility vs standardization:

The SIA community has been discussing the issue of a flexible vs standardised SIA format. The main problem with SIA standardization is complacency and uniformity (Du Pisani, 2006). Barrow (2000:70) said SIA deals with unexpected, non-standard impacts. Social issues are often not standard and requires one to be flexible, so a standardized format of investigating and reporting may cause injustice to other social issues that are not formalized. Du Pisani (2006) said for SIA practitioners to overcome this problem, there should be methodological guidelines for conducting SIA that will be aligned and/or incorporated into EIA regulations, and those guidelines should elaborate on the tasks of the SIA practitioner at each phase while still flexible.

(v) Public participation:

A lot has been written about the value of public participation for all stakeholders, particularly in bringing public and social values to the decision-making, to promote empowerment and equity. It should be conducted early in the project and it should be done by a neutral person in good

faith. All concerns and perceptions of the interested and affected parties (I&APs) should be collected and included in the SIA report. Wood (1995:307) regards an effective public participation as a key to a more credible social assessment and say without the public participation, SIA would be meaningless. Bureau of Mineral Petroleum (2011:1) say public participation is embedded in EIA and SIA assessments, however Du Pisani (2015:40) says the public participation in the South African EIA need to be redesigned in order to make it more effective and truly participative.

The literature review concurs with the warning from Carley and Bustelo and shows that the shortcomings in SIA theoretically affects SIA in practice. Barrow (2000) recommended the following interventions in order to improve the theoretical and legal framework in which the SIA can be practiced in South Africa: (i) there should be a professional body that will train, accredit and monitor SIA practitioners; (ii) identified a need for a formal training that specialises in SIA and (iii) social impacts should be assessed by SIA specialists.

2.7 Measuring effectiveness

The field of effectiveness is still developing and few studies have developed a framework to evaluate effectiveness in impact assessment (Saddler, 1996; Theophilou *et al.*, 2010; Chanchitpricha and Bond, 2013; Pope *et al.*, 2018). Getty and Morrison-Saunders (2020:2) states that the issue of effectiveness has been explored in detail using the EIA literature. Sadler (1996:39) put emphasis on the process and outcomes to ascertain whether the results of the process meet the expected purposes, based on the three categories of effectiveness of environmental assessment, i.e. (1) *procedural*-, (2) *substantive*-, and (3) *transactive* effectiveness.

Procedural effectiveness measures whether EIA conforms to the established provisions and guidelines. It looks at whether the information provided in the report for decision making is sufficient and if the information is procedurally correct and adequate to allow decision makers to come to a decision about a proposed project. *Substantive effectiveness* assesses if EIA is complying with its purpose of supporting decision-making and protecting the environment. This instrument looks at whether EIA have complied with the objectives of the legislations. *Transactive effectiveness* assesses if EIA achieves its course at a lower rate and less timeframes. In addition to the above three categories of effectiveness, Baker and McLelland (2003:252) also introduced *normative effectiveness* to the framework and they define it as an instrument that assesses if impact assessment has achieved its ideal and normative goals

according to the perspectives of First Nations people. Pope *et al.* (2018) refined the frameworks and included the test questions to be asked to ascertain effectiveness:

- *Procedural effectiveness* evaluates if the actions taken during assessment are following the appropriate procedures and international best practice;
- *Substantive effectiveness* evaluates the extent at which the assessment conducted leads to changes in process, actions, learning or outcomes;
- *Transactive effectiveness* assesses what outcomes can be achieved when someone is conducting assessment while minimum time and costs are invested; and
- *Legitimacy* evaluates the perceptions of the various stakeholders regarding the legitimacy of the assessment.

Chanchitpricha *et al.* (2019) and Getty and Morrison-Saunders (2020) have adopted these effectiveness frameworks. They have incorporated them into the evaluation of the SEA practice and in evaluating effectiveness of integrating EIA and mine closure planning processes. Bond *et al.* (2018) stated that IA can be measured in two ways, firstly by assessing the quality of the reports and secondly by the effectiveness of SIA report and by assessing if the SIA report achieves its objectives. Sowards (2015:201) and Vanclay (2019:4) have indicated that there should be a rigorous peer review process of the impact assessments report because this will assist in producing high quality reports and in most instances, quality reports are effective. Sowards (2015:201) say that quality review is the “process of scrutinizing and validating research findings prior to dissemination”. The quality of the SIA reports produced indicate the effort put in conducting the SIA and they are mostly associated with effectiveness as discussed in Section 2.8.

2.8 Assessing the effectiveness of SIA

Cashmore *et al.* (2004) and Retief *et al.* (2011) have argued that assessing the effectiveness of EIA is problematic because there are no tools to compare the implementation with. For the purposes of this study, various studies that have been conducted regarding the effectiveness of EIA (in turn SIA) will be reviewed. O’Faircheallaigh (2009:99) described the effectiveness of SIA as the quality of “facilitating the political mobilization of the affected communities and allowing the renegotiation of power relationships between the affected groups, corporations and governments”. O’Faircheallaigh (2009:99) further explored the alternative approaches to assessing the effectiveness of SIA and acknowledges that literature on SIA effectiveness is limited and that researchers and practitioners are not consistent on what is meant with the understanding of ‘effectiveness’. Other relevant studies have shown that the perspectives on

the effectiveness of impact assessment (IA) tools have differed widely. Limited literature that is currently available shows how the inadequacies and malpractices of practitioners hampers the effectiveness of SIAs. Burdge and Johnson (1994) revealed that some practitioners refused to conduct primary research in order to save cost and time, and this have resulted in their research lacking empirical evidence. Suopajärvi (2013:32) reported that failing to perform a thorough scoping by SIA practitioners have resulted in impacts on vulnerable groups unassessed. Harvey *et al.* (2011) called for attention to misconduct of deliberately shaping a favourable public opinion by controlling and guiding the content, structure, and organisation of public engagement.

Internationally, Sadler (1996) assessed the practitioners and researcher's views on the effectiveness of the assessment of the socio-economic impacts in Australia, New Zealand and North America, where the results revealed a "poor" rated status. In European countries like Denmark, Environmental Assessments (EAs) are characterized by debates and conflicts on social impacts (Larsen *et al.*, 2015). Their EAs are required to pay attention to social impacts and need to investigate the implementation in practice. However, reports suggests that the EAs do not match the public concerns and social impacts are not always analysed in detail and there are no mitigation measures in place and the impacts are biased towards including negative local impacts. This highlighted that a neutral practitioner acting in good faith is required when social issues are assessed. According to Vincent and Morrison-Saunders (2013), in countries like Sri Lanka and New Zealand, the effectiveness of EIA is at risk because of political interference. SIA in New Zealand is given a relatively limited attention and it is also shown in the lack of the vulnerability assessment in the New Zealand's plans and policies (Saunders *et al.*, 2014). Chanchitpricha *et al.* (2019) assessed the effectiveness of 14 SEAs reports using the recently published framework and majority of SEAs failed to achieve legitimacy.

Whereas, in East African countries like, Kenya, Tanzania and Rwanda have similarities and differences when it comes to implementing EIA (Marara *et al.*, 2011). These East African countries are highly populated, and they are all experiencing socio-economic difficulties like most developing countries, such as illiteracy and poverty. This have led to biased decisions when it comes to economic development. In these East African countries, the priority is on economic growth while EIA is seen as a legal-jargon that is anti-economic growth. EIA is only considered much later into the development process and in most times, it is done for legal compliance more than anything. Sometimes developing countries are more worried about the economic development and issues of environmental degradation or protection are given the least attention. It is important that SIA is conducted by competent or trained social specialists that will bring these issues to the fore. Abaza *et al.* (2004) concluded that the EIA in East

African countries may be sound, however the effectiveness is severely impacted by the lack of an improved legal framework. Purnama (2003) said the procedural framework of these three countries seems to be the weakest link of their EIA systems and have indicated that their lack of public participation is the worst.

In South Africa, with over two decades since the adoption of NEMA, there is still no explicit legislative requirements for SIA. This has since led to SIA being referred to as the “orphan” or “lesser sibling” of impact assessments compared to EIA (Du Pisani and Sandham, 2006; Hildebrandt and Sandham, 2014). The reason for SIAs neglected status is argued to be because there is little consensus on the meaning or understanding of SIA, there is no statutory body that registers, guides and monitors SIA practitioners, and that there is no consensus on prescriptive requirements or guidance for conducting SIA. Barrow (2010) stated that developers do not know the scope of the SIA and this leads to the SIA scope being too narrow and without clear conceptual frameworks; that for SIA to be meaningful, it should be applied early in the project to ensure that there is accountability of the developers and to assist in achieving sustainable development. However, Retief (2007) suggested that practitioners need to redefine the purpose of their assessment or rethink the way in which their assessment is applied. SIA in South Africa has spread slower, is less applied and is not addressed in a uniform approach and these can be attributed to the fact that there is lack of SIA practitioners with adequate qualifications and experience in social sciences (Hildebrandt, 2012; Hildebrandt and Sandham, 2014; Kruger *et al.*, 2020). Hildebrandt and Sandham (2014) took a step further and evaluated the effectiveness of SIA by evaluating a sample of SIA reports. Their research revealed that there has been a positive change with the migration from ECA to NEMA, and that there is an improvement in the requirements that concern social impacts. Chadwick (2002) made a conclusion that all the studies that have been done on SIAs are in agreement on the poor or unsatisfactory treatment of the SIAs under EIA, leading to other researchers calling SIA a “lesser sibling” or the “orphan” of the assessment process in the South African EIA process and other researches see SIA as a neglected assessment when compared to EIA (Burdge, 2002; Hildebrandt and Sandham, 2014; Aucamp and Lombard, 2017). Dani (2003:3) attributes this perception to the fact that many practitioners regard EIA as the “mother of all impact assessments”, and SIA as no more than a subset of EIA. This leads to the misconception that social effects are less important and are only necessary if there are environmental impacts.

This study shows that SIA is a link between communities and economic development by the government so it is important that SIA is conducted according to best practice and effectively in order to develop sustainably. Even though the SIA standard in the South Africa is still lacking behind when compared to the international SIA standard, that if all the issues like adapting the

international principles to suite the South African and developing more explicit SIA regulation, are adopted then SIA best practice in South Africa has a potential to improve and subsequently improve the effectiveness of SIA. However, despite all the above mentioned issues, Burdge (2002) show that there has been considerable improvements in SIA practice over time globally however, SIA is still lacking behind when compared to EIA.

2.9 Chapter summary

This chapter looked at what is the value of SIA and what are the issues around SIA practice that have a potential to render SIA ineffective. The chapter discussed how the core values of the SIA principles since their inception in 1999 and looked at the SIA tasks in order to assess the theoretical framework of SIA. The chapter presented the SIA tasks and discussed the SIA tasks in the South African context to see where South Africa is lacking in order to be on the same standard as the international SIA best practice. The chapter also discussed the conceptual frameworks developed and adopted by various researchers on how to assess effectiveness. Both the international and the local literature on effectiveness of SIA was reviewed using various case studies and it showed that there has been difficulty in reaching a consensus on how to measure effectiveness of an impact assessment. The next chapter will look at the research methodology that was used in data collection and data analysis of the empirical investigation of this study.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 investigated the value of Social Impact Assessment (SIA), SIA principles and how the SIA principles evolved in order to achieve best practice. More emphasis was put on discussing the emerging trends from the evolved SIA principles. Chapter 2 also highlighted the aim of this research study, by reviewing the existing literature about effectiveness of SIA internationally and nationally and how effectiveness can be measured. Chapter 3 discusses the chosen research methodology, the methodology techniques that was used to answer the research questions and why that methodology was chosen by highlighting the methodology's strengths. In this chapter, a detailed overview on how the data was collected, and how the sample was selected will be discussed. This chapter will also discuss the importance of a sample size and lastly, how the research was conducted and feedback from the participants was analysed.

3.2 Research design

Research is defined as a “systematic and redefined technique of thinking, employing specialised tools, instruments, and procedures in order to obtain a more adequate solution of a problem than would be possible under ordinary means” (Crawford in Singh, 2006:5). Research starts with a question, collects data or facts, and then analyse that data to arrive at a decision based on factual evidence. According to Maree (2016:246) there are four (4) research methodological approaches researchers use when conducting research, namely:

- a. *A Qualitative research approach* which is a rigorous approach to finding answers to research questions through process observation and spending extensive time in the field;
- b. *A Quantitative research approach* that is a research that uses evidence from surveys to either support or refute hypothesis;
- c. *A Mixed-methods research approach* that combines both qualitative and quantitative research approaches; and
- d. *A Multimethod research approach* which involves multiple studies of either qualitative or quantitative and mixed methods research approaches.

Within each of these abovementioned research approaches, researchers can choose their own design that is more aligned to their research topic. Research methods consist of three (3)

stages, namely: (1) forms of data collection; (2) analysis; and lastly (3) interpretations that the researcher propose for their studies. This study follows an inductive research approach, which is an approach that uses examination and trend analysis from the data collected to observe a social phenomenon (Braun and Clarke, 2012:57). Inductive research approaches allows the researcher to use existing theory to formulate research questions (Saunders *et al.*, 2012:157). A qualitative research approach was selected as the best research methodological approach, because it offers an objective approach to experiment, while remaining in the background since the research is to explore the perspectives of SIA practitioners regarding the effectiveness of SIA. Section 3.3 gives a detailed discussion on the data collection.

3.3 Data collection

To answer the research objectives that was set in Chapter 1, Section 1.5, this section focuses on the data collection methods that were utilised in order to answer the set research objectives, firstly by conducting an extensive literature review, and secondly by conducting an empirical investigation to explore the perspectives of SIA practitioners.

3.3.1 Literature review

For the purposes of this study, an extensive literature investigation was conducted in order to reach the first Research Objective (RO1), which is to understand the fundamental purpose and objectives of SIA. The literature review assisted the research to address the research objective one in Section 1.5 which is to understand the purpose of SIA and the objectives it aims to achieve. The following literature sources have been consulted in this regard: Library books, journals articles, international best practice guidelines, and relevant Masters and PhD dissertations from the North-West University – Institutional Repository (NWU-IR) and the North-West University Library catalogue of books were investigated. The investigation of the literature sources was necessary as it gave the framework for this research and validated the need to conduct this research and made the researcher aware of the similar research taking place.

3.3.2 Empirical investigation: A qualitative research approach

A qualitative research approach is described as “a type of research that focuses on quality such as words or observations that are difficult to quantify and that lend themselves to interpretation

or deconstruction” (Glesne, 2011:283). Sutton and Austin (2015) stated that qualitative research is concerned with how human behaviour can be explained within the framework of the social structures in which that behaviour takes place. Rosenthal (2016) added that qualitative research aims to gain an in-depth understanding of a specific organization or event instead of a shallow, brief of a large population. Qualitative research, also called ‘field research’, is about selecting and recording behaviours of people in the environment using an instrument called a questionnaire (Ravindran, 2019:40). It is about understanding human behaviours through non-numeric data (Schwandt, 2007:12). For the purposes of this research, an ‘Action Research Spiral Process’, also known as a ‘participatory process’ was used.

The use of the questionnaire in the Action Research Spiral Process was chosen as the best way to answer Research Objective two (RO2) in Section 1.5 which is to understand the effectiveness of SIA from the perspectives of South African SIA practitioners. The questionnaire was structured into two sections, i.e. Section A was about the participants’ background, and Section B, was about the participants’ experience with regards to best practice and effectiveness of SIA. Lune and Berg (2017:139) described the Action Research Spiral Process as “a kind of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in a social relationship with one another in order to improve some situation or condition with which they are involved”. The Action Research Spiral Process was chosen for this study, because of its two distinct purposes which are firstly to produce new information and knowledge that will be useful to the selected group of people, and secondly to motivate and encourage an average person in the research group to take up the new information and knowledge from the research and use it (Johnson, 2008). According to Lune and Berg (2017:137) the qualitative research approach consists of four steps in the Action Research Spiral Process (Figure 3-1). The four individual steps and how it was applied in this research study will be discussed in further detail below.

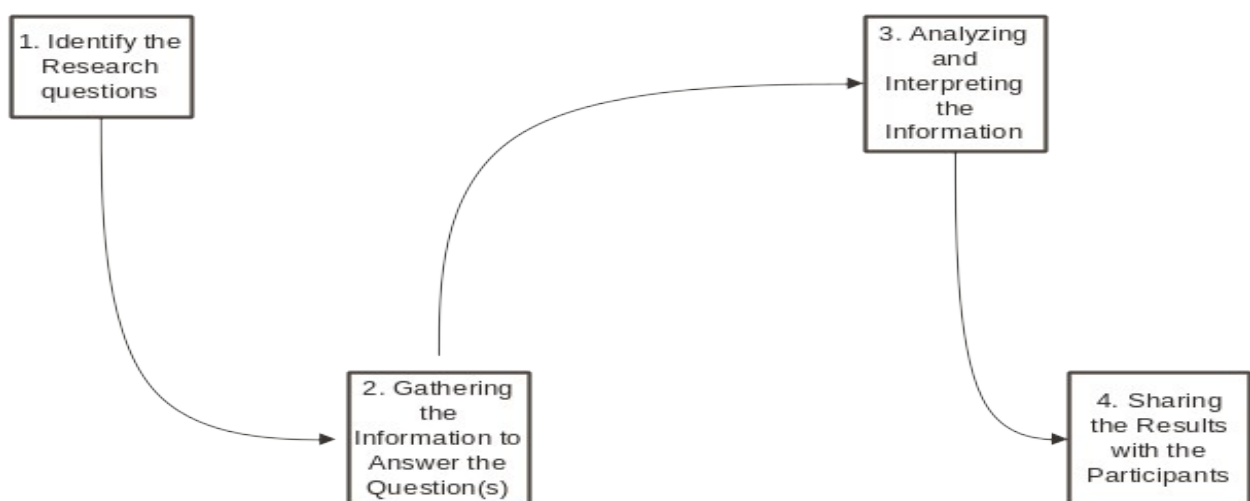


Figure 3-1: The Action Research Spiral Process (Adapted from: Lune and Berg, 2017:139).

3.3.2.1 Step 1 – Identify the research questions

The primary method of data collection used for this study was through the use of questionnaires. Questionnaires are used in a wide range of settings to gather data about the opinions and behaviours of consumers (Williams, 2003). For this study, data was collected in the form of a self-administered structured questionnaire to gain insight and an understanding of the perspectives of South African SIA practitioners on the practice and effectiveness of SIA. An abbreviated sample of the questionnaire is provided in Table 3 -2. An example of the full questionnaire is included in Annexure A.

The questions in the questionnaire for this study were formulated based on the issues raised in the literature review conducted in Chapter 2. The questionnaire consisted of 18 questions in total consisting of open- and close ended questions, respectively. Additionally, the questionnaire was divided into two (2) sections for participants to self-administer. The first section (Section A), (Questions A1–A5) was aimed to determine the background information and experience of the South African SIA practitioners that participated in this study. This was followed by the second section (Section B) which focused on the perspectives of the participating SIA practitioners on the effectiveness of SIA (Questions B1–B12).

Table 3-2: Abbreviated version of SIA questionnaire (Own Contribution).

Sections	Contributing Questionnaire Questions
A: SIA Practitioner Background and Experience	A1. What is your highest level of qualification? A. <i>Certificate</i>; B. <i>BSc/ BA</i>; C. <i>MSc/ MA</i>; D. <i>PhD</i>; E. <i>Other</i>. A2. How many years of working experience do you have in Social Impact Assessment (SIA)? A. <i>1-5 years</i>; B. <i>6-10 years</i>; C. <i>11-15 years</i>; D. <i>More than 15 years</i>. A3. What is the number of Social Impact Assessments (SIA) reports you have prepared in the last 10 years? A. <i>0-5 reports</i>; B. <i>6-10 reports</i>; C. <i>More than 10 reports</i>; D. <i>Other</i>. A4. In which sector/s did you gain your experience in conducting SIA? Select more than one where applicable. A. <i>Private consultancy</i>; B. <i>Academia</i>; C. <i>Government</i>; D. <i>Other</i>. A5. How much formal assessment/training do you have in SIA? A. <i>Extensive</i>; B. <i>Moderate</i>; C. <i>Little</i>; D. <i>None</i>.
B: SIA Effectiveness	B1. To what extent is SIA in practice an important assessment tool? A. <i>Very important</i>; B. <i>Moderately important</i>; C. <i>Not important</i>; D. <i>Can do without it</i>.

s	B2. From your experience, do you think that SIA is an effective assessment tool? A. <i>Very effective</i>; B. <i>Moderately effective</i>; C. <i>Least effective</i>; D. <i>Not effective</i>. B3. Previous studies have found that SIA is often confused with public participation. A. <i>Strong agree</i>; B. <i>Slightly agree</i>; C. <i>Slightly disagree</i>; D. <i>Strongly disagree</i>. B4. In your opinion, how important is transparency and accountability as essential elements of the SIA process? A. <i>Very important</i>; B. <i>Moderately important</i>; C. <i>Slightly important</i>; D. <i>Not important</i>. B5. From your perspective, what is the goal of SIA and do you think it is achieving what it is set out to achieve? B6. From your experience, what are the most important shortcomings of SIA that might be an obstacle towards its effectiveness? B7. South African SIA practitioners have adopted mainly two guidance documents, i.e. the “Guidelines for involving Social Assessment Specialists in the EIA process” developed for the Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning of the Western Cape Province, and “Guidance for assessing and managing the social impacts of projects” by IAIA. Do you think there is a need for SIA regulations/guidelines in SA? B8. Previous studies conducted by Hildebrandt and Sandham (2014) showed that there has been a slight improvement in the quality of SIA reports from ECA to NEMA. What is your opinion regarding the quality of the SIA reports in SA? B9. In your opinion, what constitutes best practice SIA? B10. Indicate to what extent is SIA in practice effective? A. <i>Very effective</i>; B. <i>Moderately effective</i>; C. <i>Least effective</i>; D. <i>Not effective</i> B11. As a specialist in the field, do you think effective SIAs will influence decision making? B12. From your perspective, what can be done to improve the effectiveness of SIA in SA?
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3.3.2.2 Step 2 – Gathering the information to answer the questions

The initial intention was to have face-to-face interviews with the SIA practitioners, however due to the COVID-19 pandemic that is affecting the world, the researcher had to use other methods of data collection to limit face-to-face contact. Therefore, the questionnaire was e-mailed to a sample of South African SIA practitioners to self-administer, in order to gain their perspectives about SIA effectiveness. The questionnaire was sent via e-mail to a sample of 72 South African SIA practitioners. The questionnaire was sent to more practitioners because according to Bartlett *et al.* (2001) to increase the sample size during distribution is a common way to save time and to ensure that minimum sample target is met. Selected practitioners were from different industries like government, private and independent. Hennink and Kaiser (2020:490) describes data saturation as “the point in the research process when no new information is discovered in data analysis, and this redundancy signals to researchers that data collection may cease”. Data saturation is an important tool in snowball sampling because it provides data validity and is often included in qualitative research to assess the quality of the research (Hennink and Kaiser, 2020). A detailed discussion on sampling will be discussed in this chapter under the sampling section (Section 3.4). Fusch and Ness (2015) say there is “no one size fits all” in data saturation because it is a difficult concept to define and there are no universal study designs. The invited SIA practitioners were initially given two weeks to respond, however

because of a poor responding rate during this timeframe, this was later extended with another one week. At the end of that extended week, a total number 18 responses were received from SIA practitioners, making this the final sample size. More detail on sampling and sample size will be discussed in this chapter in Section 3.4.

3.3.2.3 Step 3 – Analysing and interpreting the information

Post data collection, the initial step taken towards data analysis, was to check that all 18 questionnaires' feedback were filled correctly. After ensuring that questionnaires were correctly completed, data was then analysed using thematic analysis (TA). Thematic analysis is defined as "a method for systematically identifying, organizing and offering an insight into patterns of themes (meaning) across the data set" (Braun and Clarke, 2012:57). Lune and Berg (2017:139) stated that the analyses of data involves the interpretation of data in relation to possible solutions to the questionnaire developed in Step 1 (Section 3.3.2.1) of the Action Spiral Research Process. This step is dependent on the type of data collection method used in Step 2 (Section 3.3.2.2) of the Action Spiral Research Process. For this research study, the researcher used a Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) which is a Qualitative Data Analysis Software (QDAS) to log and code the data. Cohen *et al.* (2003) describe the SPSS software as the best software for analysing qualitative data because of its advantages that include: it can relate two data sets, it is user-friendly and can analyse multiple-response questions. Table 3-2 below shows the themes that emerged from the participants' feedback and the contributing questionnaire questions that contributed to these themes. The following three themes emerged from Section B of the questionnaire: (1) *SIA in practice* (Questions B1, B3 – B5, and B8 – B9 and B11); (2) *SIA effectiveness* (Questions B2, B6, B7 and B10) and (3) *SIA improvement* (Question B12).

Table 3-3: Themes that emerged from the questionnaire feedback (Own contribution).

Themes	Contributing questions to each theme
Theme 1: SIA in Practice	B1; B3; B4; B5; B8; B9 and B11.
Theme 2: SIA Effectiveness	B2; B6; B7 and B10.
Theme 3: SIA Improvement	B12.

3.3.2.4 Sharing the results with the participants

This final step of the Action Spiral Research Process concerns the sharing of the results of the research with the participants that took part in the questionnaire. Lune and Berg (2017:140) states that sharing the results of the research with the participants will encourage working as a collective among the participants in order to bring about change to the issues identified. This dissertation will be made electronically available on the NWU webpage for the participants to access at any given time.

3.4 Sampling

Researchers normally have strict time frames to complete their studies so in order for the research to meet those timeframes, the researcher will need to do sampling of the population that they want to base the research on, to meet strict time frames, reduce margin of error and manage limited resources available. Sampling is taking a subset from a chosen population or entire population used to make an inference about the chosen population or to make generalization in relation to the existing theory (Taherdoost, 2016). According to Taherdoost (2016), sampling can be divided into two types: probability/random and non-probability/non-random sampling (Figure 3-2). Probability sampling refers to every item in the sample having an equal chance of being selected in the sample since the sample is selected randomly using a computer program. One of its advantages is that it is free from bias, however it has a high level of sampling error (Zikmund, 2002). Yen (2003) stated that non-probability sampling focuses on small samples and it intends to examine real life phenomenon and not to make statistical inference in relation to the wider population.

This study used a purposeful snowball sampling technique in order to answer the research questions. Purposeful sampling is defined by Patton (2014:2) as “selecting information rich cases to study, cases that by their own nature and substance will illuminate the inquiry question being investigated”. Purposeful sampling was selected because of its benefit of effective use of limited resources and SIA community is classified as a small community. Snowball sampling was chosen because it is most applicable in small populations that are difficult to access due to their closed nature like secret societies and inaccessible professions (Breweton and Willard, 2001). SIA practice is an inaccessible profession because it does not have a regulatory body. Even though snowball sampling is time-consuming, it has an advantage to estimate rare characteristics (Briks and Malhotra, 2006).

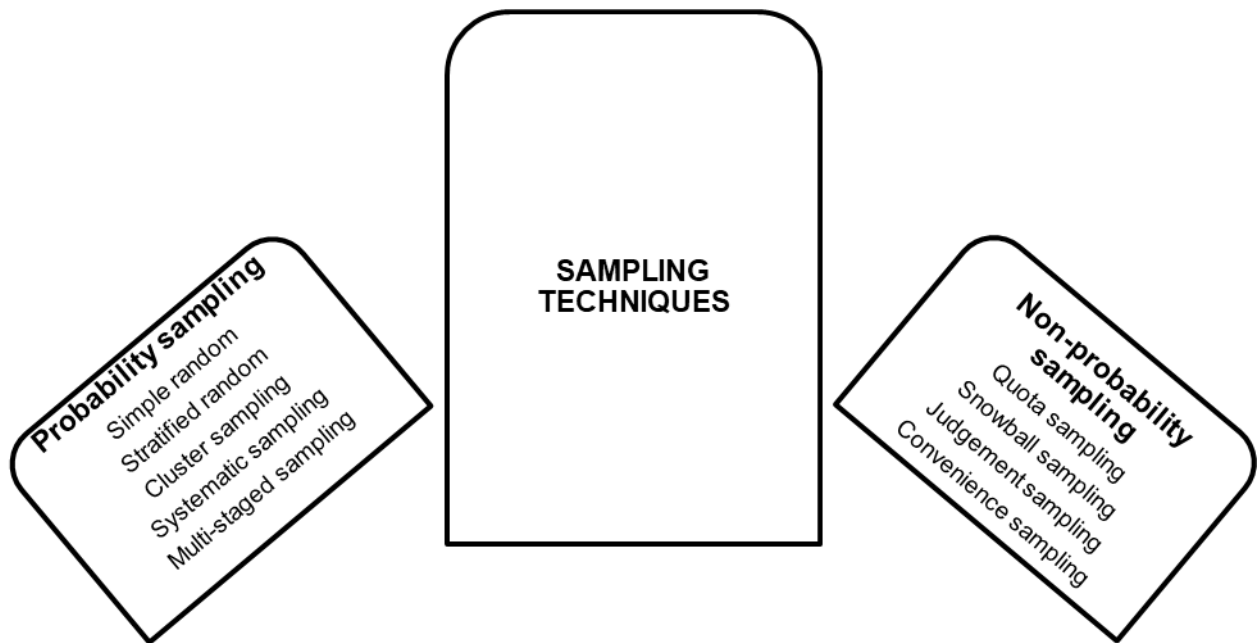


Figure 3-2: Sampling Techniques (Taherdoost, 2016:16).

According to Taherdoost (2016) and Gill *et al.* (2010) an adequate sample size should be surveyed in order to reduce sampling errors and bias. Sandelowski (1995) recommends that researchers use small sample sizes in 'deep, case-oriented analysis' and in 'new and rich textured understanding' large sample sizes are used. For this study questionnaires were sent to 72 participants with knowledge and experience in SIA. Even though the target was to get response from approximately 15 practitioners, at the end 18 practitioners responded making this the final sample size. Based on the feedback received, the feedback showed the redundancy signals as discussed in step 2 of the Action Research Spiral Process, and based on the redundancy signals the researcher was convinced that the data saturation has been reached.

3.5 Ethical considerations

This study employed different ways to ensure that the ethics of research are followed. Firstly, the research ensured that the participants remained anonymous. Secondly, participants were informed about the purpose of the study and that they were given an opportunity not to participate if they did not want to, hence participation was voluntary. According to the North-

West University (2018), ethical considerations should be acknowledged and taken into consideration during research. The study was conducted based on secondary data from literature reviewed, evaluation of adherence to SIA best practice and supported by interviews in the form of questionnaires, with limited human interaction. The study involved human participants, but did not include any sensitive respondents like children, elderly and persons with disabilities. The research proposal was submitted to the Scientific Committee of the Environmental Management Research Group (EMRG) in the Unit for Environmental Sciences and Management of the North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus for consideration. The Scientific Committee found that the project proposal was in accordance with the scientific method and adhered to the required standards as set out in the Academic Rules for Master's and Doctoral Students at the North-West University and the committee issued the researcher with an ethics number (Ethics number: NWU-01308-20-A9). The Scientific Committee concluded that the proposed methodology posed a minimal ethical risk, hence exemption from further ethical approval was recommended for the study.

3.6 Methodological limitations

The main limitation of this research study was the availability of literature on SIA effectiveness. Since this topic of SIA effectiveness is not well-researched, it was difficult to compare the findings of this research study with that of the previous authors to provide context. The other limitation of this research study was the inability to conduct face to face interview due to the current global pandemic of COVID-19. The researcher notes that respondents are more likely to rush through the self-administered questionnaires than during face to face interviews where there is an opportunity for the researcher to ask follow-up questions.

3.7 Chapter summary

The objective of this chapter was to highlight the importance of choosing an appropriate research methodology for this research in order to meet the research objectives. This chapter discussed the different types of research methodologies, discussed a detailed literature review on the chosen research methodology, thus the qualitative research methodology. In this chapter, reasons were provided for the research methodology chosen in this study and this was validated by its advantages. The chapter discussed the Action Spiral Research Process and discussed how the researcher linked this research process to the research study. In this chapter the different types of sampling techniques, how to eliminate the errors in sampling and how the

population was sampled was also discussed. This chapter also discussed the importance of data sampling and when to cease data collection based on data saturation literature. The chapter also discussed the computer programs used in data analysis and how the program will be used to analyse the data collected. Detailed data analysis and discussions will be presented in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 discussed the type of research methodology that will be followed and gave reasons why the qualitative research method is used in this study. Chapter 4 presents the data collected from the SIA practitioners in South Africa. The objective of this chapter is to analyse the data collected in order to answer Research Objective two (RO2) as mentioned in Chapter 1, Section 1.5. RO2 for this study is to understand the effectiveness of SIA from the perspectives of South African SIA practitioners. The feedback received from the questionnaire in Annexure, Section A will be presented per question followed by a summary of the findings with integration of literature reviewed in Chapter 2. The feedback received from the questionnaire in Annexure A, Section B will be according to the themes that emerged from their responses as shown in Table 3-2 in Chapter 3. Section 4.3 of this chapter summarises the findings of this research. Section 4.4 of this chapter gave a summary of the chapter.

4.2 Research findings

The questionnaire in Annexure A used for data collection consist of two sections, Section A focused on the background of the SIA practitioners, where they demonstrated their highest level of education; their years of work experience in SIA; the sector where they gained their SIA experience and lastly, the level of formal training they received in SIA. The responses to the questionnaires will be coded to adhere to the ethical requirements of this study and the participants will be referred to as participants PTP1–PTP18.

Data obtained from Section A of the questionnaire is presented in Section 4.2.1. Section A of the questionnaire consisted of five close-ended questions (Questions A1–A5). Questions A1, A3 and A4 consisted of semi-closed questions of multiple choice with an option for participants selecting 'other' so that they can elaborate more on their choice. Questions A2 and A5 consisted of close-ended questions of multiple choice.

4.2.1 Section A: Participants' background

The first question of the five questions under Section A (Question A1), the participants were asked to indicate their highest level of education as shown in Figure 4 -3. The results in Figure

4 -3 shows that five (5 of 18) participants demonstrated that they have a doctorate qualification by choosing the option “D. PhD”, nine (9 of 18) held a Master’s degree (C. MSc/ MA), two (2 of 18) a Bachelor’s degree (B. BSc/ BA), and only one (1 of 18) had “A. Certificate”. Only one participant responded that they have “E. Other”. In response hereto, the participant (PTP4) elaborated that: *“My field of study is historical and cultural science specializing in heritage and cultural tourism and a master’s degree in it, MCHS. It involved a range of subjects some of which were largely anthropology and tourism-related that gave me a sensitivity to culture as well as development endeavours”*.

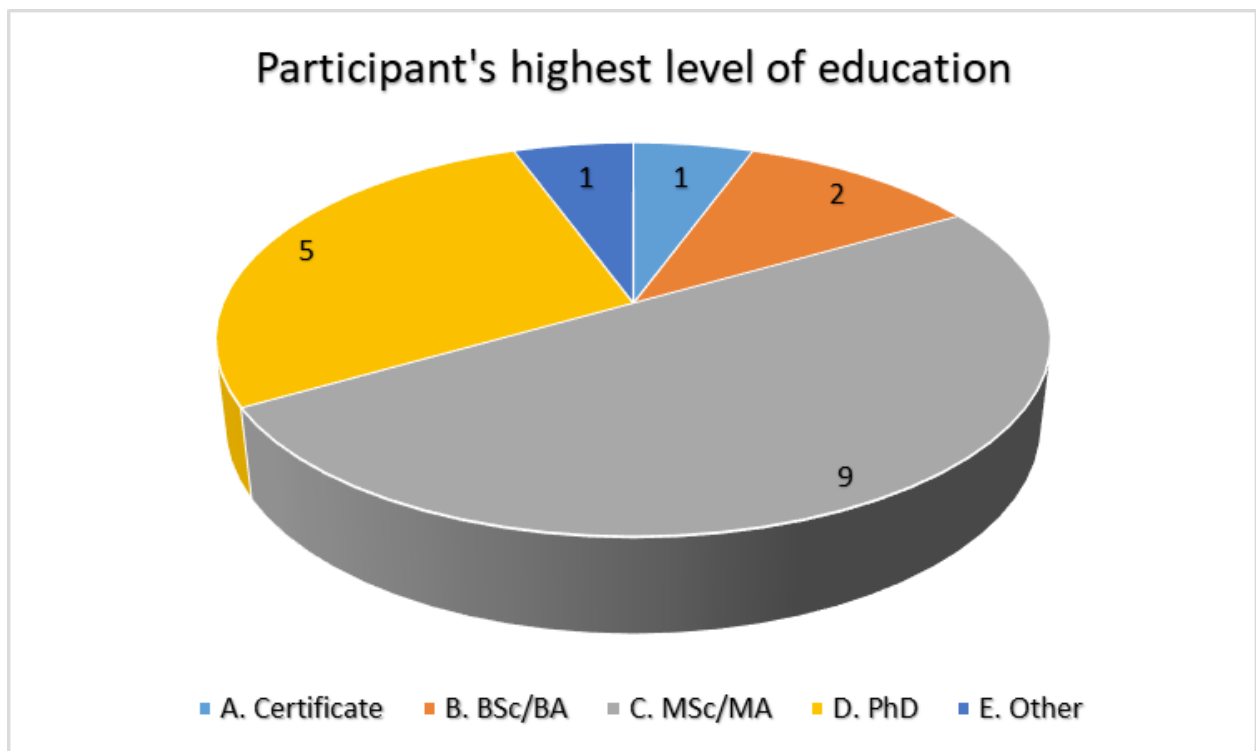


Figure 4-3: Participant's highest level of education (Question A1).

In Question A2 the participants were asked about the number of years’ experience they have been working in the SIA field. Out of the 18 participants, 12 has demonstrated that they have more than 15 years’ experience, three (3) had between 11–15 years, two (2) had 6–10 years’ experience, and one left the question unanswered as it can be seen in Figure 4 -4.

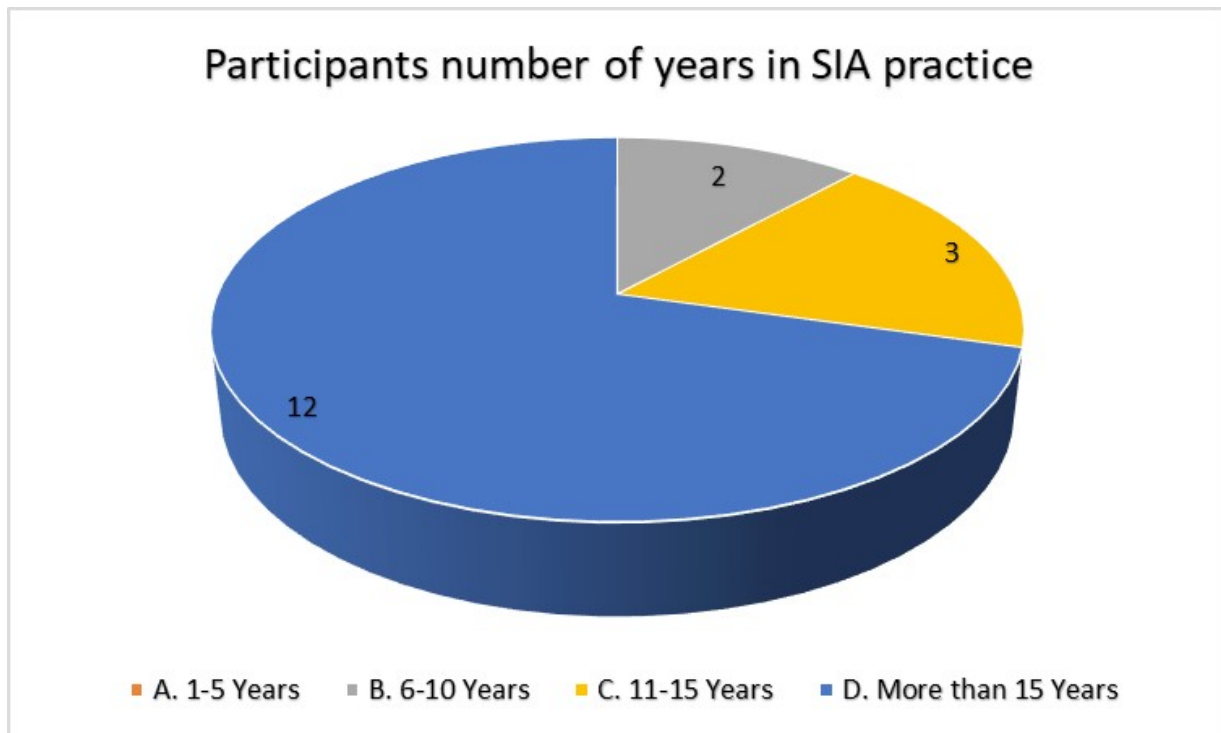


Figure 4-4: Practitioners' work experience in SIA (Question A2).

In Question A3 the Participants were asked to demonstrate the number of Social Impact Assessments (SIA) reports that they have prepared in the last 10 years. Of the 18 participants, 13 participants indicated that they have conducted "C. More than 10 reports" in the last 10 years, whereas one (1) participant revealed they have conducted "B. 6-10 reports", and another one (1) had conducted "A. 0-5 reports". Three (3) of the remaining participants chose "D. Other" and elaborated that they have prepared in the region of 260 SIA Reports (participants PTP9), whereas participants PTP13 and PTP17 did not elaborate why they selected 'other' as shown in Figure 4 -5.

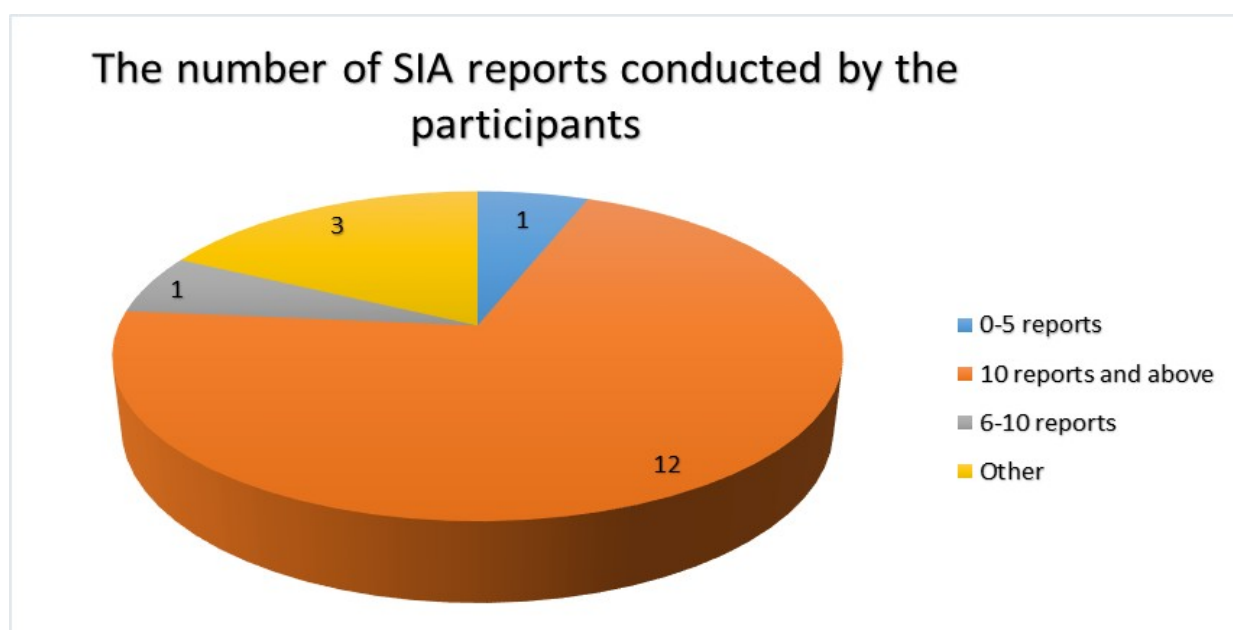


Figure 4-5: Number of SIA reports prepared in the last 10 years (Question A3).

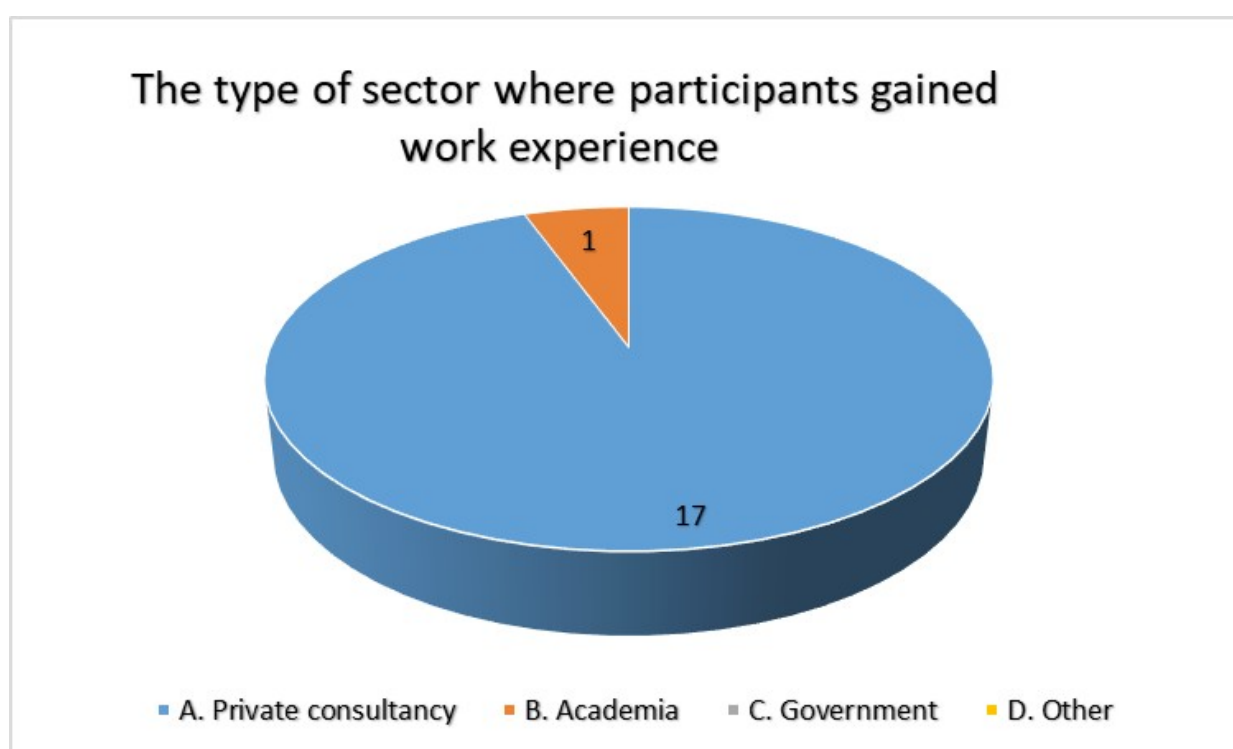


Figure 4-6: Sector/s where participants gained work experience in (Question A4).

Question A4 asked the participants about the sector/s where they gained their work experience in conducting SIA. All of the 18 participants demonstrated that they have gained experience in

the private sector (A. Private Consultancy). One participant demonstrated that they had additional experience in the academic sector as well (participant PTP9) (Figure 4-6).

The last question of Section A (Question A5) asked the participants on how much formal assessment or training they have in SIA. The results revealed that seven (7) of the participants had “A. Extensive” formal training, eight (8) had “C. Little” training, and three (3) had “B. Moderate” training in SIA as shown in Figure 4-5 below. None of the participants had no training in SIA.

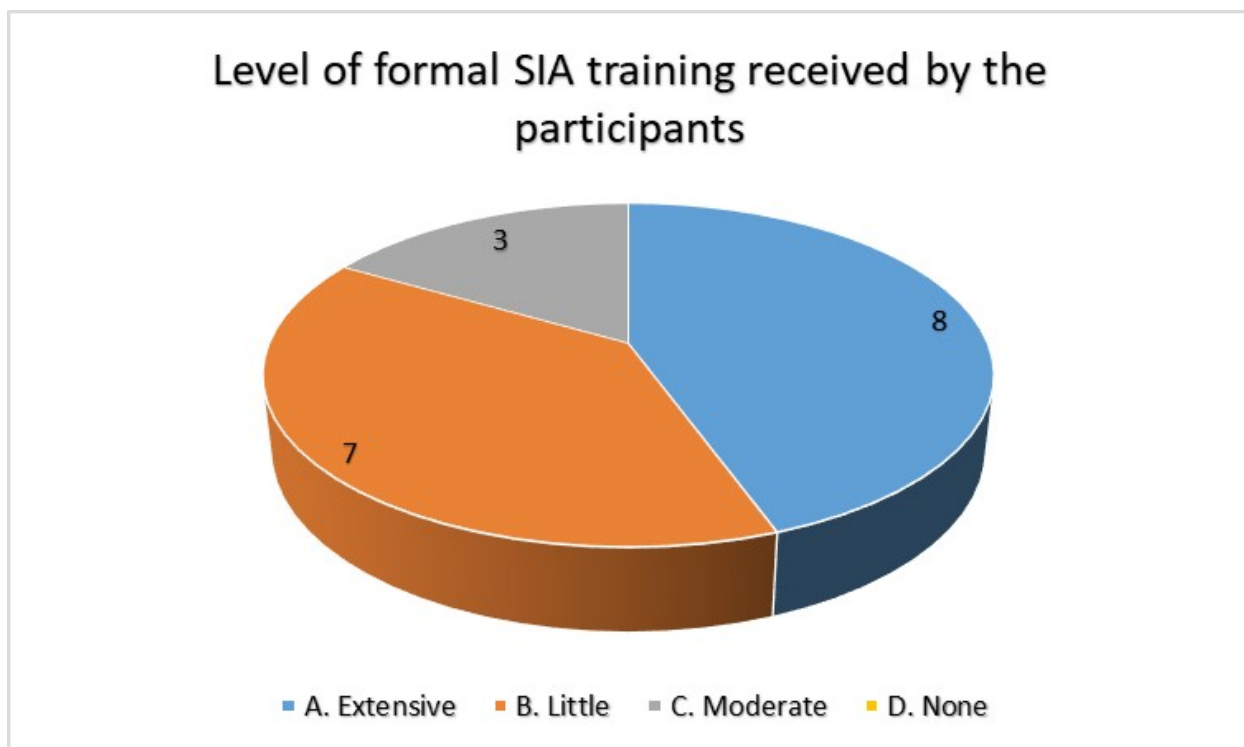


Figure 4-7: Formal training in SIA (Question A5).

The feedback received from the questionnaire about the participants' background such as the participants' years of experience in the SIA field and the number of SIA reports they have produced, it can be concluded that all the participants involved in this study are specialists in the SIA field. However, only 2 out of the 18 participants indicated that they have obtained social sciences degrees and this concurs with the literature review that said SIA can be conducted by anyone with a natural science degree.

4.2.2 Section B: SIA effectiveness assessment

Section B of the questionnaire pertained to the assessment of the goal of SIA, if its goal has been achieved, what is regarded as SIA best practice, to assess from the practitioner's perspectives if SIA is effective, what is regarded as an effective SIA, and how SIA effectiveness can be improved. This section consisted of both open-ended questions and semi-closed question to allow participants to elaborate further where necessary (see Annexure A). From the participants' responses three themes emerged, i.e. (1) *SIA practice*, (2) *SIA effectiveness*, and (3) *SIA improvement*. Table 4-4 shows the keywords that emerged from the data received from the SIA practitioners that formed part of the themes' discussion.

Table 4-4: Keywords/phrases from the participants' responses.

Themes	Examples of contributing keywords or phrases
Theme 1: SIA practice	<i>"...there has been considerable improvement; it is sometimes a "tick box" exercise for companies to complete a process and receive environmental authorization; there is insufficient budget; ...often used to identify economic benefits and not true social issues and impacts; Implementation of recommendations curtailed by proponents, or not done properly; Identify and manage the social impacts, mitigate risks using the risk mitigation hierarchy of avoid, reduce, repair and compensate; accountability and budget constraints; inclusive, transparent and objective"</i>
Theme 2: SIA effectiveness	<i>"SIA practitioners tend to differ on some of the approaches and methodologies employed in using SIA as an instrument to assess social impacts"; "achieving what its purpose is from a document execution viewpoint"; "like any other field that impacts on people' lives, there needs to be penalties for not doing it the right way";</i>
Theme 3: SIA improvement	<i>Training; increased accountability; ongoing monitoring; regulation; registration body; Legislate SIA; Accredite SIA Practitioners or create a special category in the EAPSA for SIA Practitioners; Educating authorities and proponents on the need for SIA and good implementation; Establishment of regulatory body for SIA or registration council to ensure compliance to SIA regulations and that all practitioners adhere to the same code</i>

4.2.2.1 Theme 1: SIA practice (Questions B1, B3–B5, B8–B9 and B11)

In order to answer the first objective of this research which is: "To understand the fundamental purpose and objectives of SIA", the questions in Section B of the questionnaire were grouped together as follows: Questions B1, B3–B5, B8, B9 and B11. Question B1 contributed to the SIA practice theme, where the participants were asked to what extent they think SIA is an important tool. As it can be seen in Figure 4-8, the majority of the participants (17 of 18) perceives SIA as an "A. Very important" assessment tool, while only one participant (participant PTP2) perceived SIA as a "B. Moderately important" assessment tool.

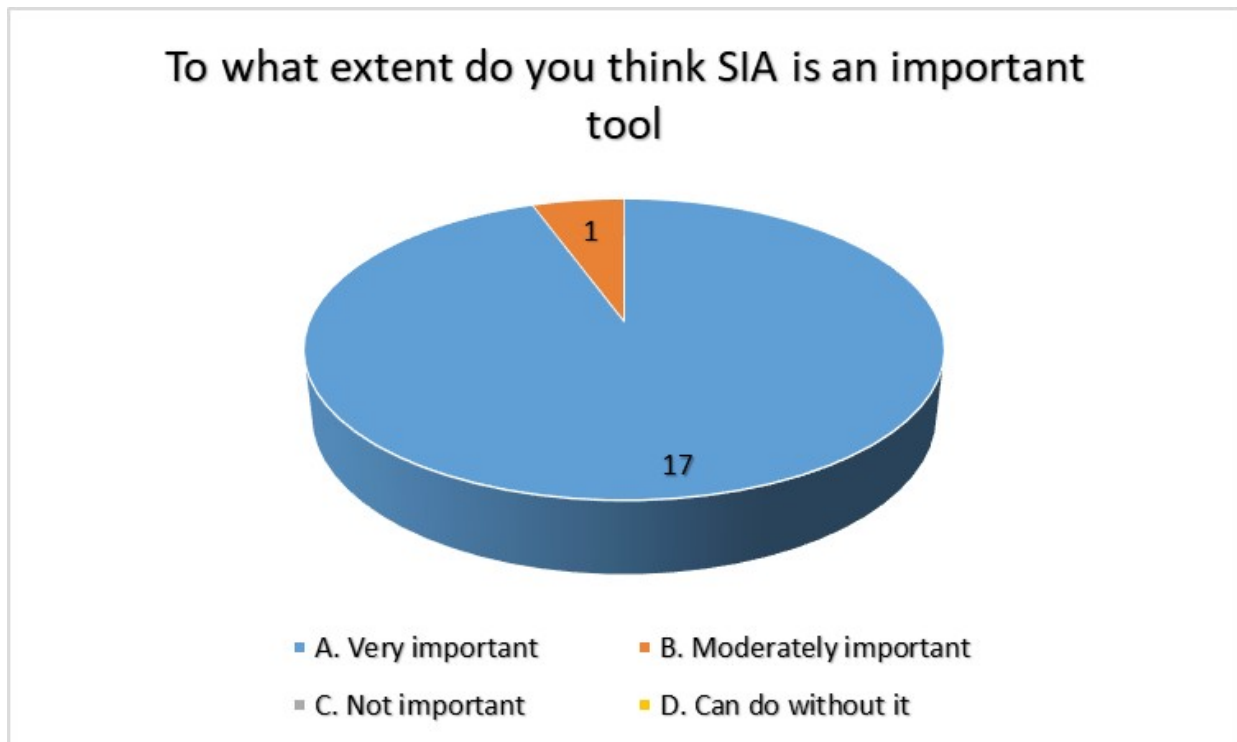


Figure 4-8: SIA as an important assessment tool (Question B1).

Question B3 asked participants if they think SIA is often confused with public participation. This was asked in order to address the notion that SIA is often confused with public participation and that in practice, there is lack of education and knowledge as people tend to regard public participation as SIA. The confusion of the SIA with public participation may lead to some clients using the public participation report to replace SIA. The feedback as shown in Figure 4 - 9 reveals that the majority of the participants (15 of 18) overall agreed that SIA is confused with public participation (A. Strongly agree=11; B. Slightly agree=4), whereas three participants overall disagreed (C. Slightly disagree=2; D. Strongly disagree=1).

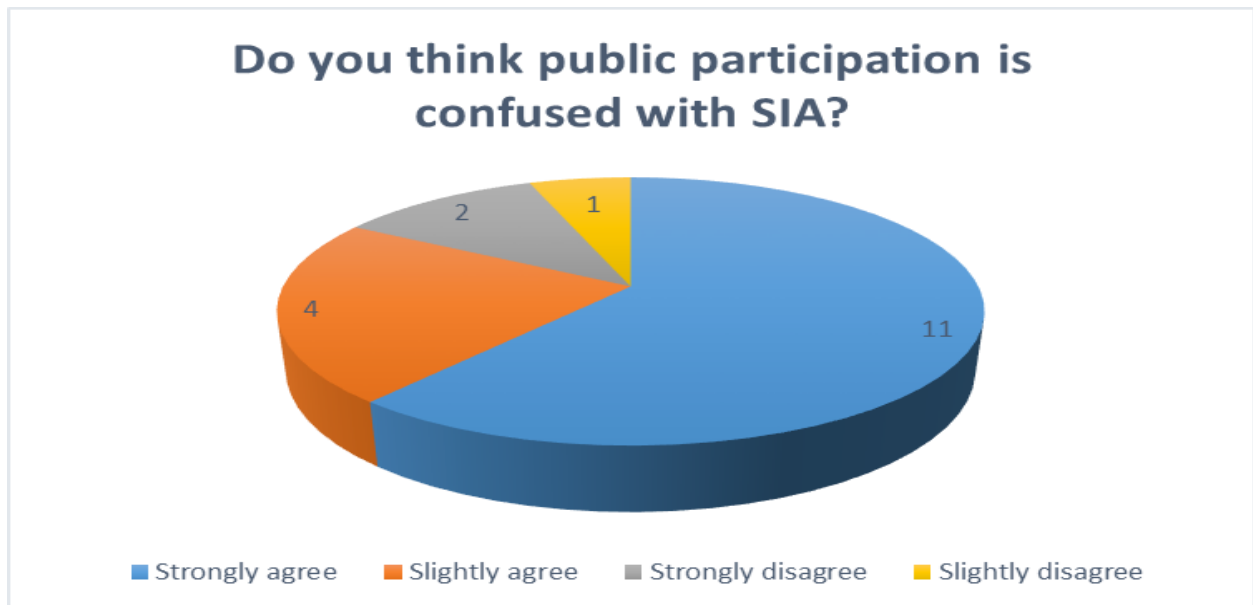


Figure 4-9: Public participation is often confused with SIA (Question B3).

Question B4 asked the participants about the importance of transparency and accountability as essential elements of the SIA process. The feedback received with regard to this question indicated that all participants agreed that transparency and accountability are “A. Very important” essential elements of SIA. This indicates that the participants believe in having a regulatory body that will hold the SIA practitioners accountable.

Questions B5 is included in this theme in order to determine what the goal of SIA are and if the SIA practitioners perceive that SIA is achieving its objectives. The feedback received indicated that there is a common understanding among participants of what the goal of SIA are. The participants stated that the purpose of SIA is to “*analyse and anticipate the effects of a development project of the people, prior to development*” (participant PTP2), “*to identify and evaluate the potential impacts of a project/activity/policy on individuals, households communities and broader society*” (participant PTP3), and “*to identify and manage the social impacts, mitigate risks using the risk mitigation hierarchy of avoid, reduce, repair and compensate*” (participant PTP4). However, 10 out of the 18 participants say they are not convinced that SIA is achieving its goal: participant PTP1 stated that “*SIA is achieving what its purpose is from a document execution viewpoint and lacks when during implementation*”; participant PTP3 said that SIA is partially achieving its purpose due to the fact that it is because “*used to identify economic benefits and not true social issues and impacts*”; according to participant PTP4 “*SIA has a potential to go a long way if it is in the “right hands” meaning if conducted by knowledgeable personnel with good intentions*”; and participant PTP11 also

added that *“SIA has an enormous potential if utilized correctly”*. Further in response hereto PTP6 is of the view that as long as SIA is still conducted under the EIA umbrella, *“SIA will [continue having] more limitations”*, and participant PTP9 concurs with participant PTP6 that for SIA to achieve its goal under EIA, *“SIAs should also play a key role [be considered] in planning and the design of programs and developments. In this way the goal is to ensure that social issues are identified and assessed as early in the planning and design process as possible and that the needs of communities are taken into account”*. However, participant PTP8 disagrees with participant PTP6 and participant PTP9 and said that even under EIA, *“if SIA is done correctly, transparently, comprehensively and without any interference, and with all stakeholders involved in the process, it should achieve what it set out to do”*.

At Question B8, participants were probed on their opinion regarding the quality of the SIA reports in South Africa. Participants PTP1, PTP3, PTP10, PTP12 and PTP17 all agree that the SIA reports quality have improved under NEMA. Participant PTP3 is of the opinion that the improvement in SIA reports quality under NEMA is due to *“...international guidelines”* while participant PTP10 and PTP17 attributed this change in SIA reports quality under NEMA due to the fact that *“NEMA, the definition of the word “environment” incorporates humans and this triggered a whole lot of impacts that should be included in the report”* and *“NEMA views communities (and their interactions and dependencies on the environment) as part of the larger sphere of the environmental community”* respectively. However, according to participant PTP2, PTP4, PTP11 and PTP16 the SIA reports quality varies and this is because *“it depends on who undertakes it”* as said by participant PTP4 and PTP16.

Question B9 of the SIA practice theme, was to get the opinion of the participants on what constitute SIA best practice. On this question, this group of participants had a common understanding and knowledge of SIA best practice that SIA should be inclusive of all stakeholders from project inception, it should be allocated enough resources like time and finances; must built on local knowledge; and must acknowledge that economic, social and biophysical impacts are interconnected. The participants also indicated that SIA requires monitoring, evaluation and reporting. However, mixed responses on what constitute SIA best practice was received. Participant PTP2 said that *“best practice SIA is where a good measure of consulting has taken place with stakeholders”*. Participant PTP3 concurs that SIA best practice *“provides a balanced, justified and defensible robust view of the social environment and potential impacts”*. However, according to Participant PTP4 *“it is the one developed with people at the centre, and not the project”* and Participant PTP5 and PTP8 added that *“SIA is the voice of the people”* and added that ensuring *“that every person affected by a project is recognised as an impacted individual”* respectively. Participant PTP7 is of the view that *“using*

people who are adequately qualified" is what constitute SIA best practice. Participant PTP12 said that since South Africa is a diverse country, they felt that *"as society is dynamic so too must SIA practice be dynamic and applicable to different scenarios"* and participant PTP6 concurs with participant PTP12 adding that *"to get good understanding of the local social environment"* is what constitute SIA best practice. Participant PTP17 said that SIA best practice emanates from the fact that *"The World Bank has developed good standards on the assessment and management of environmental and social risks and impacts, which are applied on World Bank funded projects. These standards are very comprehensive and can be used as a great guideline in SIA"*.

Questions B11 is the last question that formed part of SIA practice theme and in this question participants were asked if they think an effective SIA will/does have impact in decision making. The participant's responses to this question varies a lot because they answered this question based on their work experiences in SIA. Participant PTP1, PTP4, PTP10 and PTP11 said that *"absolutely – this should be the exact purpose of SIAs"*, however participant PTP4 also indicated that *"...that is not always the case"*. Participant PTP10 added that *"...compliance monitoring is still lacking after approval so it is a bit tricky to say conclusively if SIA has an impact on decision-making"*. Participant PTP2' perspective was that it is *"very difficult settings or communities; the value of SIA cannot be ignored and will therefore yes influence decision making"*. Participant PTP3 concurs that *"Yes...on large-scale projects where relocation/compensation has been implemented due to recommendations of SIA and inclusion of these recommendations in authorisations"*. Participant PTP5 also indicated that: *"SIA is a decision-making tool, and as such I do believe that to an extent it informs decisions. I have done some SIA's outside the EIA process and in such circumstances, SIA becomes much more. It becomes a management tool, something that can be used for monitoring and gives insight in the communities. As it is done as part of the EIA process, SIA does have some value, but more limitations. In my mind SIA is a strategic tool, where EIA is a footprint assessment, and doing many little SIAs does not add that much value. Also, especially in the mining field, and more so with the bigger mines, social accountability is becoming increasingly important, and there is much greater awareness and insight about the value of the social side of environmental management, which transcend SIA."*

4.2.2.2 Theme 2: SIA effectiveness (Questions B2, B6–B7 and B10)

The second theme that emerged from the responses of the participating SIA practitioners was about SIA effectiveness. The SIA effectiveness theme emerged from Question B2, B6, B7 and

B10 of the questionnaire. Participants were asked under Question B2 if they think that SIA is an effective assessment tool. Of the 18 participants, 11 strongly agree that SIA in practice is a very effective tool, six (6) participants said that SIA is moderately effective, while participant PTP8 disagreed and said from their experience, they found SIA to be slightly effective as shown in Figure 4 -10.

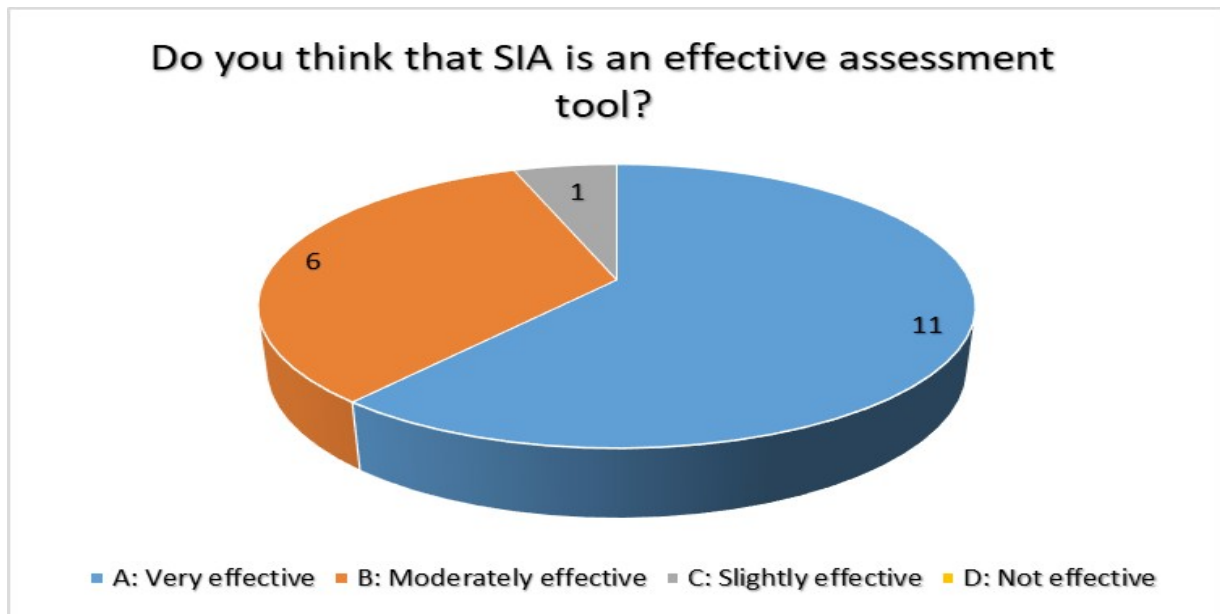


Figure 4-10: Is SIA an effective assessment tool? (Question B2).

Question B6 asked the participants about the most important shortcomings of SIA that might be an obstacle towards its effectiveness, based on their experience. Responses from the participants on this question demonstrated that they know what a best practice SIA is, however the feedback on this question had different perspectives and there was no coherence because the responses were based on the participant's experiences in SIA. Participant PTP1 is of the opinion that due to *"lack of SIA legislation, SIA practitioners tend to differ on some of the approaches and methodologies employed in using SIA as an instrument to assess social impacts"*. Participant PTP2 said that some of the shortcomings of SIA are that it is sometimes used as a *"tick box"* exercise for companies to complete a process and receive environmental authorization. Participant PTP4 concurred with participant PTP 2 on SIA being used as a *"tick box"* exercise and participant PTP4 have also added that this means *"SIA is sometimes just done as a form of compliance and not necessarily a passion and concern for the people in the respective context that drives the process"*. Participant PTP5 said from their experience, the fact that SIA *"still sits with the environmental assessments, and the expectation is that the environmental person will understand and implement the recommendations made in the SIA"* is

what is causing SIA to be ineffective. According to Participant PTP6 and PTP8, *“the lack of sufficient resources like funds and time led to a rushed SIA”* and that is what is rendering SIA to be ineffective. *“The difficulty in accessing the area of those affected by a project e.g. due to bad roads, political unrest, hostile stakeholders, no buy-in from the client, usually due to a lack of recognition of the significance of an SIA, and thus not taking the findings into consideration when determining the outcome of the project”* were the factors that led to an ineffective SIA based on the experiences of Participant PTP4 and PTP8. Participant PTP1, PTP11 and PTP13 mentioned that *“lack of formal training and lack of a regulatory body”* for the SIA practitioners were the main cause of an ineffective SIA for them, while Participant PTP10, PTP13 and PTP14 shared the same experience and they all said *“lack of accountability”*, and for Participant PTP15 and PTP18 it was *“dishonesty and unethical assessors”*. However, Participant PTP9 is of the opinion that the SIA process is conducted as a *“reactive as opposed to be proactive and informing planning and design of projects”*.

Question B7 pertained to the need for SIA regulations or guidelines in South Africa. The majority of the participants indicated that SIA regulations or guidelines will be beneficial to the practice of SIA, however each had a different opinion as to why the SIA regulations or guidelines will be beneficial. For example, Participant PTP4 is of the view that *“SIA practitioners must have a license to practice in the field. Qualifications alone are not enough, and like any other field that impacts on people’ lives, there needs to be penalties for not doing it the right way”*. Participant PTP1 stated that it *“...would be a great boost to the industry and to the current practice as this will align all procedures and processes for undertaking SIAs”*. Participant PTP2 added that *“an SIA association would be beneficial in this sense that is only for SIA specialists, where general industry knowledge can be passed on”* and that *“...because without it, assessors just do what they like and there are too many (whether legal or otherwise) loopholes to exploit”* (Participant PTP18).

At the final question that formed part of the second theme, participants were asked at Question B10 if they think that SIA in practice is an effective tool, based on their experience. As it can be seen in Figure 4 -11 six (6) participants chose *“A. Very effective”*; three (3) participants chose *“C. Slightly effective”* and (9) participants chose *“B. Moderately effective”*. None of the participants indicated that it was not effective, indicating that they are in broad agreement that SIA in practice is to some extent effective.

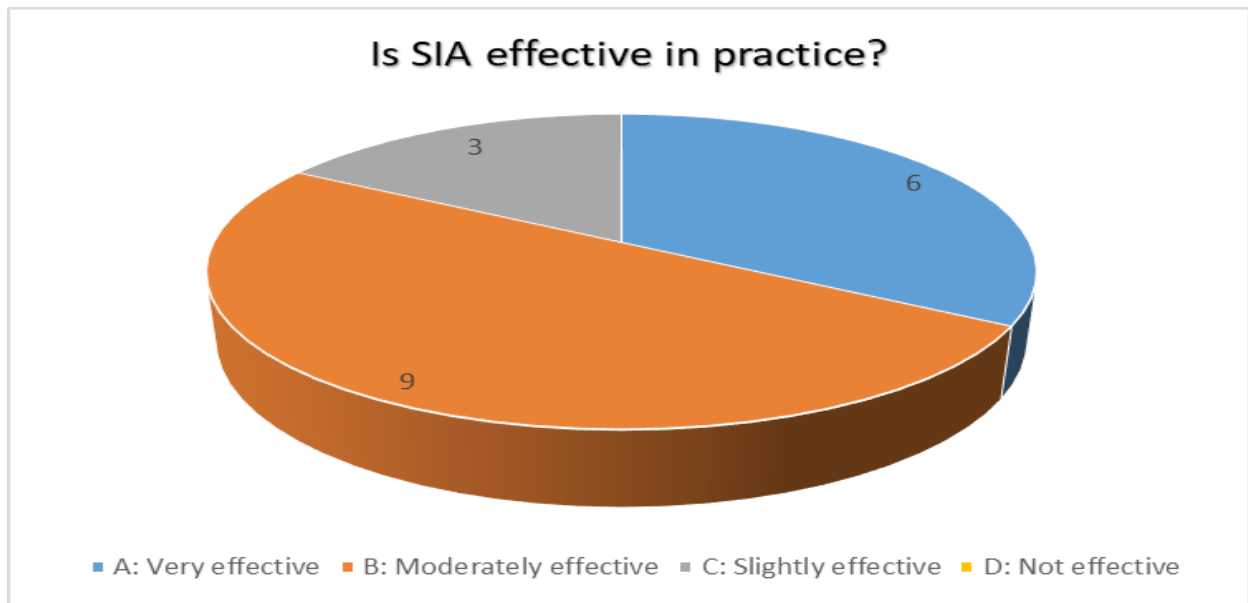


Figure 4-11: Is SIA effective in practice? (Question B10).

4.2.2.3 Theme 3: SIA improvement (Question B12)

This section discuss the SIA improvement theme (Theme 3) that emerged from the participants' feedback on Question B12, i.e. what can be done to improve the effectiveness of SIA in SA. The participants had similar opinions on what need to be done to improve SIA practice in South Africa. In their responses they demonstrated how the effectiveness of SIA can be improved. Participant PTP3 is of the view that *"introducing minimum requirement/buildings for SIA practitioners and reporting"* will assist to improve SIA, while participant PTP2, PTP6, PTP7, PTP13 and PTP15 are of the opinion that if the SIA practitioners are given *"training"* they will produce quality reports that will improve SIA. Participant PTP13 and PTP15 added that after training, the SIA practitioners should also *"register with a registration [regulatory] body"* and participant PTP7, PTP15 and PTP18 concurs that a regulatory body will *"...increased accountability, ongoing monitoring..."*. However, participant PTP17 is of the view that in order for SIA to improve, there need to be a *"develop[ed] an up-to-date single standard of performance for SIA in South Africa"*, and that we need to *"eradicate corruption in South Africa..."* (Participant PTP16).

4.3 Summary of findings

In this section the thematic analysis, interpretation of research findings and literature reviewed in Chapter 2 will be used to discuss the summary of the findings. The questionnaire started off with assessing the background information of the participants and from the feedback received it can be observed that the participants are highly educated and with high number of years' experience in the SIA field makes their feedback and input valuable for this study. The feedback received from the participants on educational level shows and supports the point raised in Chapter 2 that there is no formal competency training required for someone to conduct SIA and that SIA can be conducted by just anyone. This reaffirms findings from Hildebrandt (2012), and Kruger and Sandham (2018) that in practice, SIA is conducted by non-specialists.

4.3.1 Theme 1: SIA practice

From the feedback received from the SIA practitioners that participated in this study, it is evident that they know and understand the goal and best practice of SIA. The participants overwhelmingly agreed that transparency and accountability are essential elements of the SIA and if SIA is conducted and implemented correctly, it is a very important assessment tool. The findings indicated that in order for SIA to reach its full potential, it needs to be used from a strategic level, during the project planning stages. Aucamp (2015:208) concurs that involving the SIA practitioners early will give them more leverage to manage potential social impacts, enhance benefits and mitigate future inequality, unlike the current approach of SIA in South Africa which is a reactive one and undermines the role that SIA can play in development.

The participants were probed on their views regarding the quality of SIA reports under NEMA and from there feedback, five (5) of the nine (9) participants that responded, indicated that the quality of the SIA reports conducted under NEMA has improved, while four (4) of the nine (9) participants said the quality of the reports varies and it depends on who is writing or conducting the report. The feedback from four participants indicated that the quality of SIA reports "varies" and this concurs with the literature in Chapter 2 according to the findings of Hildebrandt (2012) and Kruger and Sandham (2018). Sandham *et al.* (2013) took it further and conducted a study on the quality of EIA reports produced under these two regimes and the results showed that good quality reports in terms of report layout, presentation and impacts emphasis however these reports were found to be lacking in monitoring arrangements. Hildebrandt and Sandham (2014:22) reviewed the quality of SIA reports under these two regimes, ECA and NEMA. The findings from their reports found that there are some improvement in SIA reports produced

under NEMA when compared to the SIA reports produced under ECA. They attributed this change to the statement by Aucamp *et al.* (2011) that SIA should go beyond covering the bare minimum requirement. The data showed that even though there are SIA guidelines, there is no uniform or standard application of those guidelines and there is poor practice of SIA in South Africa. The data showed that there seems to be a lack of consistency on what should be included in the SIA. This inconsistency in the SIA approach leads to invariable SIA reports and those reports affect the goal of SIA in South Africa. The data also showed that in South Africa, SIA is still confused with public participation to the extent where some people even mistake public participation to be SIA and that once public participation has been conducted, then there is no need for SIA to be conducted. Lockie in Kruger and Sandham (2018:6) said this confusion of SIA with public participation is because of SIA practitioners and/or researchers that still think that SIA and public participation are interdependent. Kruger and Sandham (2018:7) stated that the public and various stakeholders need to be educated on the differences of these two processes and their different requirements. Data indicated that limited budget and time constraints during SIA processes are of concern. The issue of limited budget and time constraints were identified by Du Pisani and Sandham (2006:714) and linked it to the narrowing scope of SIA by the practitioners in order to comply with the regulatory requirements of the EIA. Esteves *et al.* (2012:36) concurs that the international SIA communities share the same concerns of limited budget and time constraints. In order to achieve the goal of the SIA it is imperative that SIA is conducted throughout the project and not as a once-off process. McBride *et al.*, (2003:1) agree that as long as SIA is still used and monitored as a once-off assessment, its usefulness to contribute to social development will continue to be limited. Du Pisani and Sandham (2006:716) concurs that post-implementation, monitoring and auditing of social impacts are not enforced and are lacking due to the fact that in South Africa, SIA does not form part of the long-term process of the EIA. It appears that as long as there is no SIA enforcement, compliance will be ignored and SIA process will continue to be a weakness. Based on these issues participants were not convinced that SIA in South Africa is achieving its goal. It can be concluded that in order for SIA to achieve its goal, it should be used as a management tool instead of a regulatory tool as it done currently under EIA (Vanclay, 2015:127).

4.3.2 Theme 2: SIA effectiveness

The SIA effectiveness theme emerged from four questions in Section B of the questionnaire, namely question B2, B6, B7 and B10 as highlighted in Chapters 3. Even though the participants indicated that SIA is an effective tool, they have also indicated that there are obstacles that prevents SIA in South Africa to be effective. The participants feedback indicated that the lack of

a regulatory professional body that will hold the SIA practitioners accountable as one of those obstacles to SIA effectiveness in South Africa. Participants are of the belief that a professional body, with a code of practice that registered SIA practitioners will comply to, will improve the quality of the reports produced and in turn improve SIA effectiveness. Du Pisani and Sandham (2006:720) concurs with this finding and they said that the lack of a regulatory body for the SIA practitioners will lead to confusion on who can conduct SIA. Du Pisani and Sandham (2006:720) and Aucamp *et al.* (2011:55) added that a SIA regulatory body and continual development are necessary in order to have SIA that is up-to-date with new concepts and achieves sustainable outcomes.

The feedback from the participants indicated that the lack of SIA legislation/guidelines; SIA being used as a “tick box” exercise; the lack of formal SIA training (EAPs conducting SIA); the fact that SIA still sits with the environmental assessments; the lack of sufficient resources like funds and time led to a “rushed SIA” as the shortcomings of SIA and main causes of an ineffective SIA. The findings concurred with literature in Chapter 2 that SIA in South Africa is used by project proponents for EIA compliance and approval. The findings indicated a need for an explicit SIA legislation. The practice of SIA in South Africa is currently guided by two documents that are not really legislation (Kruger *et al.*, 2020). Those two documents are the “Guidelines for involving Social Assessment Specialists in the EIA process” developed for the Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning of the Western Cape Province, and “Guidance for assessing and managing the social impacts of projects” by IAIA. The findings emphasized the importance of a formal SIA training at the tertiary level in order to strengthen the SIA legislation.

4.3.3 Theme 3: SIA improvement

The SIA improvement theme emerged from Question 12 which asked the participants to give their perspectives on how the effectiveness of SIA can be improved in South Africa. Based on two preceding themes, thus the SIA practice and SIA effectiveness, SIA in SA is not that far behind from the rest of the world, however there is still room for improvement. Participants in this study proposed measures that can be implemented to ensure that SIA in South Africa is improved. One of the examples, the participants proposed are an introduction of a formal training on social impacts. The participants demonstrated that SIA practitioners need to be capacitated in SIA practice in order to produce and practice SIA in line with the international SIA best practice. The need for a formal SIA training concurs with the findings of Barrow (2000) and the same findings were reiterated by Du Pisani and Sandham (2006) and Hildebrandt (2012).

The participants also propose that a standard approach should be developed on how to conduct SIA, together with the establishment of a regulatory body similar to the Environmental Assessment Practitioners (EAPs) to hold SIA practitioners accountable for the reports issued. The participants' indicated that there is a need to peer review SIA reports developed by SIA practitioners with less experience in order to advice and improve the standard of the SIA reports produced especially for junior SIA practitioners without experience. The participants have also indicated that there is a need for increased financial resources and time during projects, because when SIA is conducted as a once-off its value and effectiveness decreases.

4.4 Chapter summary

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the questionnaire was sent out to 72 SIA practitioners to get their perspective on what is the goal of SIA and the level of SIA effectiveness in South Africa. Feedback was received from 18 practitioners and those participants were referred to as participants in this study and from the participants' feedback, three themes emerged. The emerged themes were, SIA practice; SIA effectiveness and lastly, SIA improvement. The general feedback from the participants indicates that they know what the goals of SIA are, and they acknowledge that SIA in South Africa has its own flaws and those flaws can be corrected and the level of SIA effectiveness will improve. The participants also indicated that SIA is an important tool and if conducted and implemented correctly, it can be an effective tool in sustainable development. The participants also recommended that there should be a formal SIA training for anyone that need to conduct SIA and there should also be a regulatory body that ensures SIA practitioners are registered and monitored to ensure compliance to the SIA ethics. The next chapter will conclude this research with the key findings from this research, conclusions and recommendations of this study.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 provided the responses to the questionnaire and linked the feedback to the literature reviewed conducted in Chapter 2. This chapter will give a brief discussion of the previous chapters and a conclusion reflections of the previous chapters. This chapter will also discuss the limitations encountered while conducting this research and discuss the key findings as addressed and presented in Chapter 4. The recommendations for implementation derived from this research findings will also be presented, and lastly the summary of suggestions for future studies will be given.

Social Impact Assessment (SIA) emerged as a tool to implement Sustainable Development following the United Nations Conference of Environmental Development (UNCED) conference held in Rio de Janeiro in 1972. Even though the SIA legislation has evolved and improved over the years, there are still limited research studies around SIA effectiveness. The available literature shows that there is no formal training for SIA practitioners, lack of SIA regulations for SIA practitioners to abide by and there is still no regulatory body for SIA practitioners in South Africa. The research aim of this study will be discussed and summarized in this chapter.

5.2 Conclusions

The aim of this study was to understand the effectiveness of SIA through the perceptions of SIA practitioners in South Africa. In order to achieve this aim, the study was guided by the following two research objectives, i.e. (1) to understand the purpose of SIA and the variables it aims to achieve, and (2) to understand the effectiveness of SIA from the perspectives of South African SIA practitioners. The discussion of how these two research objectives were addressed to achieve the broader aim of this study is Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 and 4 for research objective 1 and 2, respectively.

5.2.1 To understand the purpose of SIA and the variables it aims to achieve

In order to answer RO1, a literature review on the background of SIA, SIA's history and values were conducted and discussed in Chapters 1 and 2.

Chapter 1 discussed the inception of EIA which was a result of sustainable development principles adopted at the UNCED conference in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992. EIA was identified in Principle 17 of the 27 Rio principles that was adopted at this conference, as a solution to achieving economic development while protecting the environment. The chapter further focused on providing the statutory and the legislative literature on EIA (and in turn SIA). Chapter 1 also discussed the regime changes that happened in South Africa that led to the adoption of the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA) in 1998, and it was noticed that NEMA has a strong focus on social issues. To address these social issues, Social Impact assessment (SIA) was identified as the tool to manage the social issues, however SIA is practiced as a sub-tool under EIA and not as a stand-alone assessment. This meant that SIA can only be conducted when EIA is triggered during a project. As highlighted in Chapter 1, the problem with the integration of SIA under EIA is that EIA is treated as less important. The objectives of this study were highlighted in Section 1.5 of Chapter 1 and it was highlighted that there is limited research on SIA effectiveness and the SIA effectiveness is measured by the quality of EIA reports produced.

Chapter 2 discussed the core values of the SIA principles. Chapter 2 also looked at the SIA tasks in order to assess the theoretical framework of SIA. The chapter presented the SIA tasks and discussed the SIA tasks in the South African context to see where it is lacking in order to be on the same standard as the international SIA best practice.

5.2.2 To understand the effectiveness of SIA from the perspectives of South African SIA practitioners

This research objective was addressed in Chapters 3 that discussed the methodology used in data collection and in Chapter 4 that discussed the research findings. In order to successfully answer this objective, a qualitative research methodology was chosen and the self-administer questionnaire was developed and distributed to the SIA practitioners in South Africa. The study was guided by the literature reviewed in both Chapters 1 and 2 when developing the questionnaire and the research findings were discussed in the previous Chapter (Chapter 4). Three themes emerged from the participants' feedback, i.e. Theme 1 – SIA practice; Theme 2 – SIA effectiveness; and Theme 3 – SIA improvement. Section 5.3 will discuss the key findings from the research as identified in Chapter 4 (Section 4.3).

5.3 Summary of the key research findings

This section provides the key research findings from the empirical investigation presented in Chapter 4. The discussion of the key findings will be presented according to the three themes that emerged during this study.

5.3.1 Theme 1 – SIA practice

The feedback obtained from the participants indicated that they are in agreement with each other when it comes to SIA's goal and practice in South Africa. However, the participants indicated that conducting SIA under the EIA umbrella is hindering SIA from achieving its full potential of social impacts management and sustainable development. EIA as a regulatory tool, has its own authorisation timeframes that it should comply to and those timeframes are prioritised more than the SIA requirements. The participants indicated that SIA in theory and in practice are not aligned due to issues like budget and time constraints and the current system of conducting SIA as a once-off assessment has leads SIA be seen as an outcome instead of a process. The lack of project management and monitoring tools in South Africa is not in line with the international SIA best practice and SIA is used as a regulatory tool instead of a social management and monitoring tool.

5.3.2 Theme 2 – SIA effectiveness

The findings indicated that the establishment of a regulatory professional body (that will have a code of conduct for the SIA practitioners to abide by and have a minimum requirements for one to be SIA practitioner), will upgrade the SIA practice into a profession and that will reduce the current practice in South Africa where anyone with a natural science degree is allowed to conduct SIA. The establishment of formal accreditation and professional accountability mechanisms would signal a mature, professional discipline and it will address some of the issues identified in this study like best practice, legislation, implementation mitigation and monitoring and lastly, will lead to SIA conducted at the strategic level. The lack of a regulatory professional body for SIA practitioners leads to some indecisiveness on who should conduct the SIA. This indecisiveness is preventing the advancement in SIA best practice and the SIA to achieving its effectiveness.

5.3.3 Theme 3 – SIA improvement

Despite the problems and challenges identified in Chapters 3, 4 and 5, the participants are optimistic about the future of SIA in South Africa. The findings indicated that there is a need for a regulatory body and the development of the SIA guidelines that will enforce compliance. The study also indicated that peer reviewing of SIA reports written by new practitioners and mentoring of new practitioners is also a possible solutions to improving the quality of SIA reports produced and this will in turn improve SIA effectiveness.

5.4 Recommendations and areas of future research

From the outcomes obtained from this study, it is clear that the problems pertaining to SIA practice in South Africa is persistent and in order to improve the standard of SIA the following interventions are recommended:

- ❖ Establishment of regulatory body for SIA or registration council to ensure compliance to SIA regulations and that all SIA practitioners adhere to the same code of ethics. The regulatory body that will hold the SIA practitioners accountable and to ensure that they produce quality reports that are peer reviewed.
- ❖ Develop a specialised SIA training programme that will be a minimum requirement for SIA practitioners to conduct SIA. This training should include ethics course.
- ❖ Peer review of reports, especially for new SIA practitioners – SIA practitioners that participated in this study are recommending that new practitioners should have mentors that will review their reports before they are issued. The new SIA practitioners are also required to be mentored until such time that they are comfortable and confident enough to work independently.

Social impacts are not the sole responsibility of SIA practitioners alone, the communities need to become more engaged with ethical issues and debates. The project owners need to know that the usefulness and value of SIA is highly dependent upon good practice guidelines and good ethical practice and that, it is non-negotiable. When clients and other users understand the ethical requirements which underpin SIA good practice, they will be in a position to demand that ethical standards be met.

The other recommendation for future researches is that the study should look at broadening the sample size and scope.

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ANNEXURE A: QUESTIONNAIRE



Institution: North-West University

Campus: Potchefstroom

Field of Study: Master of Environmental Management

Mini-dissertation title: Understanding the effectiveness of Social Impact Assessment (SIA):
perspectives from South African SIA practitioners

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Dear SIA Practitioner,

My name is Nare Matlakala. I am a post-graduate Masters student engaged in the study of the abovementioned topic at the North-West University, Potchefstroom campus under the supervision of Dr. Leandri Kruger. This research forms part of my Masters studies in Environmental Management. The aim of my study is to understand if Social Impact Assessment (SIA) is working the way it was intended and if it is achieving what it is set out to achieve.

The purpose of the study is two-fold:

- To understand the purpose of SIA and the variables it aims to achieve; and
- To understand the effectiveness of SIA from the perspectives of South African SIA practitioners.

You are invited to participate because of your expertise in the relevant field of SIA. This research will be conducted by a structured questionnaire which consists of 18 closed- and open-ended questions, respectively. The interview process will take about 30 – 45 minutes to complete. Participation will be on a voluntary basis and you are free to withdraw from the questionnaire at any time. There are no risks in this study as all results will be presented anonymously for

confidentiality purposes. Kindly return your completed questionnaire to nare.matlakala@sanbs.org.za by the 14th of August 2020.

Thank you in advance for your participation in this study and your contribution to the field of SIA research.

Kind Regards,

Ms. Nare Matlakala

QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SIA: PERSPECTIVES FROM SOUTH AFRICAN SIA PRACTITIONERS

Instructions:

- Please use **X** to indicate your selection.
- Kindly elaborate in your answers where necessary.

SECTION A: BACKGROUND OF SIA PRACTITIONER

A1. What is your highest level of qualification?

A. Certificate	B. BSc/ BA	C. MSc/ MA	D. PhD	E. Other

Kindly elaborate on your field of study. If your answer is "E. Other", kindly elaborate on your qualification details as well:

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A2. How many years of working experience do you have in Social Impact Assessment (SIA)?

A. 1-5 years	B. 6-10 years	C. 11-15 years	D. More than 15 years

A3. What is the number of Social Impact Assessments (SIA) reports you have prepared in the the last 10 years?

A. 0-5 reports	B. 6-10 reports	C. More than 10 reports	D. Other

If you answer is "D. Other", kindly elaborate on your answer:

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A4. In which sector/s did you gain your experience in conducting SIA? Select more than one where applicable.

A. Private consultancy	B. Academia	C. Government	D. Other

If your answer is "D. Other", kindly provide the name/s of sector/s:

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A5. How much formal assessment/training do you have in SIA?

A. Extensive	B. Moderate	C. Little	D. None

SECTION B: SIA EFFECTIVENESS ASSESSMENT

B1. To what extent is SIA in practice an important assessment tool?

A. Very important	B. Moderately important	C. Not important	D. Can do without it

B2. From your experience, do you think that SIA is an effective assessment tool?

A. Very effective	B. Moderately effective	C. Slightly effective	D. Not effective

Kindly elaborate on the reason for your answer:

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B3. Previous studies have found that SIA is often confused with public participation. Do you:

A. Strongly agree	B. Slightly agree	C. Slightly disagree	D. Strongly disagree

B4. In your opinion, how important is transparency and accountability as essential elements of the SIA process?

A. Very important	B. Moderately important	C. Slightly Important	D. Not important

B5. From your perspective, what is the goal of SIA and do you think it is achieving what it is set out to achieve?

B6. From your experience, what are the most important shortcomings of SIA that might be an obstacle towards its effectiveness?

B7. South African SIA practitioners have adopted mainly two guidance documents, i.e. the “Guidelines for involving Social Assessment Specialists in the EIA process” developed for the Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning of the Western Cape Province, and “Guidance for assessing and managing the social impacts of projects” by IAIA. Do you think there is a need for SIA regulations/guidelines in SA? Kindly elaborate on your answer:

B8. Previous studies conducted by Hildebrandt and Sandham (2014) showed that there has been a slight improvement in the quality of SIA reports from ECA to NEMA. What is your opinion regarding the quality of the SIA reports in SA?

B9. In your opinion, what constitutes best practice SIA?

B10. Indicate to what extent is SIA in practice effective?

A. Very effective	B. Moderately effective	C. Slightly effective	D. Not effective

Kindly elaborate on the reason for your answer:

B12. As a specialist in the field, do you think effective SIAs will influence decision making?

B13. From your perspective, what can be done to improve the effectiveness of SIA in SA?

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