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the Modern State"

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## Editorial Note

The Academic year 2023 became one of the most critical and challenging years for the IPADA Conference and its leadership, and yet the most memorable and successful year of this Scientific project. We remained scholarly vigilant, visioned and believe that indeed there is no easy walk to freedom, and that the road will not only remain thorny, but also very long. In this long walk to African scholarly freedom, we also accept the reality that some soldiers fell, while others remain standing to the end. For those who remained standing and strong, we thank GOD for creating such courageous men and women of integrity and we believe human consciousness is an inborn quality and we need to keep it to work for humanity. By His Grace our commitment to serve humanity, we hope and believe that the International Conference on Public Administration and Development Alternatives (IPADA) will continue to achieve without fail to succeed to provide quality scholarship opportunity to both the emerging and established scholars wishing to learn and share knowledge with the rest of the scholarship community. From the Desk of the IPADA Board we are and we will forever be indebted to African scholars and those from the other continents who have taken their time to be part of this African scholarship project. We thank mostly at our IPADA 2023 Annual Conference, those from Nigeria, Malawi, Botswana, Japan and Thailand for always making our Conference INTERNATIONAL. The IPADA Conference has a good historical record of consistently and successfully hosting the Conference from 2016 to date and will continue to achieve that vision without an option of giving up or failing, no matter the magnitude of the challenge. From inception we have successfully hosted this African Scholarship project respectively as follows: Limpopo province (2016), Botswana (2017), Saldanhabay (2018), Southern Sun, OR Tambo International Airport (2019), Virtual Conference (2020) and Virtual Conference (2021), Premier Hotel, OR Tambo Airport (2022) and Holiday Inn, Sunnyside Park Hotel, Johannesburg (2023). Our scientific project objective as the IPADA conference continues to be rooted deeply in our desire to bring together academics from a multi-disciplinary context in the African region and beyond to engage on critical public administration and development issues in different context. We have since inception in 2016 crafted different Conference themes which are of interest to both African scholars and those outside our continent. In our 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference, the Scientific Committee of the International Conference on Public Administration and Development Alternatives deliberately crafted the theme "Governance Challenges, Sustainable Economy and the Administration of the Modern State" to provoke debates that would ultimately bring about administrative, economic and political solutions to the African continent and beyond. The theme was in line with the governance challenges facing our modern state, and responsible for maladministration in most developing countries.

The majority of papers published in these Conference proceedings addressed public administration from various countries across Africa and beyond. The opportunity to share knowledge and experience with scholars from America, Japan, Thailand, Botswana, Malawi and Nigeria was prominent in the Conference interaction environment. Numerous case studies from Africa and beyond are therefore provided in this Conference proceedings edition. Colleagues from all these countries presented all their work from their own countries in context of public administration and educational problems and development matters informed by the theme. Of very significance is the fact that the IPADA 2023 Annual Conference secured 4 publication platforms for papers presented in the Conference. That includes 2 Journal Special Editions, a Conference proceeding and a Book project publication.

All papers that are published in this Conference Proceedings went through a quality scholarship verification of Triple Blind Peer Review process by specialists in the subject of Public Administration, Development and Public Governance. Papers which were accepted with suggested revisions were sent back to the authors for corrections before a final decision could be made by the Editorial Committee to publish them. The review process which determined the publishability of each paper contained herein was compiled in accordance with the editorial policy and guidelines approved by the Scientific Committee of the membership of the International Conference on Public Administration and Development Alternatives (IPADA).

The 8<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Public Administration and Development Alternatives (IPADA) successfully managed to draw together experts from the subjects' fields of Public Administration, Development Management, Human Resources and Local Government, Public Finances, Development and Economists and Military studies among others to engage scholarly in an attempt to find solutions that would improve African policy and administration systems.

This compilation provides only 23 papers out of 161 paper abstracts received and read at the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference on Public Administration and Development Alternatives (IPADA) held at Holiday Inn, Sunnyside Park Hotel, Johannesburg from September,13-15, 2023. Indeed, only 37 papers were reviewed for favour of conference proceedings publication. Out of 37 papers reviewed for that purpose, only 23 received favourable review reports and 14 were rejected for publication. This Conference Proceeding is published online (ISBN: 978-0-6397-5359-1 (print); ISBN: 978-0-6397-5360-7 (e-book) in order to be accessible to as many academics, researchers and practitioners as possible.

This publication consists of 23 scientific papers contributed by authors from varying South African Universities, international universities and public institutions. The Volume is compliant to the South African DHET policy requirement which prohibits more than 40% dominance of published papers from one institution. Indeed, papers published in this volume are from varying institutions as per the requirements of the South African Department of Higher Education and Training *Research Output Policy guidelines* published in March 2015.

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The IPADA Board would like to acknowledge and thank the University of South Africa (College of Economic and Management Sciences) for supporting and sponsoring the IPADA 2023 Annual Conference event. We really appreciate that token of good humanity from yourself, and all we can offer in return is to wish you all who were involved in this good gesture of human expression good health and blessings.

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# Analysing Governance Crisis in Developing Countries: A South African Case

MS Msiza

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**Abstract:** It is evident that effective performance of state institutions is promoted by good governance. Good leadership contributes to great performance as leaders will influence the official to work with acceptable standards. The alleged corruption of African leaders, public officials and politicians is a challenge that hinders progress in development developing countries. Covid-19 pandemic has contributed negatively to the economic growth in South African economy. The economic crises worsened and led government to borrow funds from International Monetary Fund (IMF) to stimulate the socio- economic challenges. Public officials and politicians are beneficiaries of BEE, and they are bidding for tenders indirectly that contributes to corruption and irregular expenditure. In South Africa, the current economic crisis affects every sector in the country in all aspects of life, bringing the country in political instability, individual poverty-stricken conditions, small businesses closed, South African State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) like Denel, Post Office, collapsed and some even privatised like South Africa Airways. This paper is conceptual in approach and uses desktop study to analyses crisis of governance in developing country with a focus on South Africa. The paper applied a qualitative methodology. The unstructured face to face interview data collection was used. The primary data has been collected in the Department of Home Affairs in South Africa Pretoria Regional Office. A number of 15 Officials and managers were interviewed face to face. The secondary data of official documents, archival records, and existing literature were used to address other public sector institutions in general. This paper conclude that the South African government need to strengthen anti-corruption agencies, evaluate public servants' salaries, recommends training for public officials to promote proper ethical standards.

**Keywords:** Accountability, Development, Effectiveness, Governance, Transparency

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## 1. Introduction

In every sector, corruption and unethical standards becomes a serious impediment to progress of development growth and good governance in third world countries (Pollitt, 2016). South Africa is not exceptional from many African countries facing corruption and unethical leaders rotating in the led government party looting state coffers with impunity. Good governance is more than one form concept that stems from economic and political science (Kgobe & Mamokhere, 2021). Good governance is used both in the context of the management of public action and in a strategic perspective of economic development (Kgobe & Chauke, 2021). The low wages for public officials and their dissatisfaction of poor leadership are likely to increase corruption in public organizations by making it easier for public employees rationalize corruption. There is a positive or negative outcome that an organization's reward system can both encourage and prevent unethical behaviours. Some public

sector study in South Korea explained a negative link between performance-based reward system and bureaucrat's susceptibility to accepting bribes. It is lack of decent salaries that compels public officials in the state institutions to accept bribery or steal from public purse (Sebola, 2021).

Nigeria became an independent nation from 1960. At independence, the mission of the Nigerian government was to enhance the living standard of the people through the purposeful creation of agencies in the different sectors of the nation's economy to cater for the specific needs of the people in terms of development. Apparently, those agencies created by the government to facilitate development growth became patronage for political loyalty and conduit pipes for corruption in the society (Akintoye & Opeyemi, 2014). In many years, the noble goals of development by the Nigerian government through the creation of public agencies have been truncated by the lack of accountability on the part of corrupt public officials and leadership entrusted to

manage these agencies and lack of trust on the part of citizens about government actions (Mabunda & Mamokhere, 2023). Mamokhere et al. (2023) state that accountability entails that public officials who manage public organizations are made accountable to the public – both in policies and actions. It has been observed that "Nigeria's inability to decisively tackle most development challenges such as poverty, unemployment and deplorable state of infrastructure have been largely attributed to bad governance in all its ramification" (TAFGN, 2011-2015). Good governance increasingly remains a dream in most African countries and South Africa is not exceptional as it consists of most natural resources, mines, State Owned Enterprises, and global companies invested in it, yet poor governance and corruption is rife and impedes developmental growth (Mamokhere, 2022).

## 2. Need for Ethical Leadership in Public Organizations

Good governance practiced by political leaders and senior Officials as an example to public servants and society lowers corruption (Mabunda & Mamokhere, 2023). It has been seen in first world countries as a common practice especially in Britain. The employees' ethical behaviour and decisions are mostly guided largely by the reward system. Thus, the need for ethical leadership will be higher in public organizations that yet to establish a decent reward system (Mamokhere et al., 2023). In these organizations, ethical managerial leadership becomes more effective in guiding employee behaviour and reducing corruption (Kgobe & Chauke, 2021). In these times of great transformation, accelerating globalization and increasing uncertainty, all countries, whether developed or developing, are searching for a new form of governance that is better adapted to the times so as to gain an advantage in economic competitiveness and create substantial and sustainable social growth. There are reciprocal links between human development and economic growth, and that one impacts the other. The relationship between good governance and the economy demonstrates that governance quality has a positive effect on economic development (Anttiroiko, 2017). Good governance presents diminishing marginal returns, which means that the high-speed economic growth effect becomes less and less, while the high-quality economic development effect becomes more and more, at least in the developed countries, such as the cases studied in China, New Zealand, Finland, and Singapore (IJSSR, 2023).

Good governance should be at the centre of active and productive cooperation between the government and citizens. And the key to its success lies in the powers participating in political administration (Mabunda & Mamokhere, 2023). Only when citizens have sufficient political power to participate in elections, policy-decision making, administration and supervision can they prompt government and cooperate to build public authority and order. To date, democracy has become the only practical mechanism to safeguard the fully free and equal political power owned by citizens in every country under democratic government, as good governance is organically associated with democracy (Sebola, 2021). The fruits of good governance can only be enjoyed in a free and democratic political system, as it cannot emerge without people's rights, freedom, and democracy. In fact, there were more profound causes why the theory and practice of good governance sprang up in the 1990s. In South Africa post 1994 it was the down of democracy after the sufferings of the wrath of apartheid brutal regime. The first South African democratically elected president late President Nelson Mandela gave citizens hope and African National Congress party did thrive during those years as a beginner of black people's government (Mamokhere, 2021). There was a change in all sectors and black people were appointed as executives, senior officials, and most public servants in most institutions. This change was good in the beginning but became to be a challenge in South Africa as time goes on. It is important to balance the race when employing people in every sector in any country as a mechanism to bring about rainbow nation and balance the ideas and great minds from different races to contribute good governance.

Good governance is globally applicable than good government in the traditional sense. Good government has the same scope of coverage as the State (Sebola, 2021). Apparently, the State cannot interfere in all areas, from civil organizations like companies, communities, clubs, and professional associations to the international community. In contrary, good governance is not subject to the scope of coverage of the State as it is also indispensable to companies, communities, regions, states, and the international community. As the government authority of nation-states in the traditional sense is eroded, good governance is playing an increasingly important role (Kgobe & Mamokhere, 2023). It is because the international community and the society within a state are still in want of public authority and order, a



new kind of public authority and order that can only be achieved through good governance, rather than created by the State in the traditional sense. Good governance is an inevitable result of democratization (Sebola, 2021). In response to the challenge, many scholars and international organizations have come up with a number of concepts, such as meta-governance, sound governance, effective governance, and good governance. Among them, the most influential one is "good governance". Ever since the State and government came into being, there had been the concept of good government. However, since the 1990s, good government, which had dominated as a political ideal, has been severely challenged around the world. Good governance means the public administration process that maximizes the public interest (Mamokhere & Meyer, 2022). Allegedly, government is said to privatize most SOEs, and South African Airways was the first to go. Other SOEs like Denel, Post Office, Transnet have collapsed after 2018 when former President Zuma resigned. These SOEs were looted by way of tender irregularities and cadre deployments of ANC led government in South Africa. The existing administration of president Ramaphosa is aiming to privatize the remaining ailing SOEs. To sum up all the perspectives on good governance, we can see that it has six essentials:

### **2.1 Legitimacy**

This refers to the state or quality that social order and authority are voluntarily recognized and obeyed. It has no direct relevance to laws and regulations, and from the legal angle something legal is not necessarily legitimate. Only the authority and orders genuinely recognized by people within a specific group are legitimate in political science. The higher the degree of legitimacy is, the higher the level of good governance will be. The principal approach to achieving and improving legitimacy is to maximize the consensus and political identity shared by citizens. Therefore, good governance requires the relevant administrative bodies and administrators to manage various conflicts of interest among citizens and between them and the State to the maximum so as to obtain the citizens' maximum consent to and approval of their public administration activities.

### **2.2 Transparency**

This refers to the publicity of political information. All citizens are entitled to the information on State policies that are related to their own interests,

including legislative activities, policymaking, legal provisions, policy enforcement, administrative budget, public expenditure, and other relevant political information. Transparency requires that the aforementioned political information be duly communicated to citizens through various media vehicles so that they can participate in public policymaking and supervise the process of public administration in an effective manner. The higher the degree of transparency is, the higher the level of good governance will be.

### **2.3 Accountability**

Accountability means holding every person accountable for his or her own behaviour. In public administration, it refers in particular to the duties related to a certain position or institution and its corresponding obligations. Accountability means that administrators and administrative bodies must fulfil the functions and obligations of the positions they hold. If they fail to fulfil their bounden functions or duties, or if they do so in an inappropriate manner, their conduct constitutes dereliction of duty or lack of accountability. The more accountability the public, especially public officers and administrative bodies have, the higher the level of good governance will be. In this regard, good governance requires the employment of both law and ethics to enhance the accountability of individuals and institutions.

### **2.4 Rule of law**

Essentially, rule of law means that law is the supreme principle in public political administration that should be observed by all government officials and citizens, who should be all equal before the law. The immediate goal of rule of law is to regulate citizens' behaviour, manage social affairs and maintain a normal order in social life, while its ultimate goal is to protect citizens' basic political rights, including freedom and equality. In this sense, rule of law is opposite to rule of man as it both regulates citizens' behaviour and restricts the conduct of the State. It is the archenemy of political autocracy. Rule of law is a basic requirement of good governance impossible without a sound legal system, due respect for the law or a social order based on the law.

### **2.5 Responsiveness**

Responsiveness is commonly associated with the aforementioned concept of accountability. In a

sense, it is an extension of accountability. Essentially, it means that public administrators and administrative bodies must respond to the demands of citizens in a timely and responsible manner, and that it is forbidden to make delays without cause or leave any issue unresolved without response. When necessary, they should proactively solicit advice from citizens, explain their policies to them and answer their questions on a regular basis. The greater the level of responsiveness is, the higher the level of good governance will be.

## 2.6 Effectiveness

Effectiveness refers to management efficiency. It has two essential meanings: rational administrative structure, scientifically designed administrative procedures and flexible administrative activities; and minimized administrative costs. Ineffective or inefficient administrative activities are out of tune with good governance. The higher the level of good governance is, the higher the effectiveness of administration will be.

## 3. Governance, Unethical Standards and Corruption in South Africa

Due to personal observation, there are good policies aimed at developing a country to sustainable growth and development, but the crisis of poor governance, corruption and immoral ethics hampers the implementation of such policies to bring about good governance in South Africa. These challenges continue to raise noises of ordinary civilians, NGOs, and media because corruption actions and poor governance cannot be avoided in a democratic country. For South Africa to bring itself closer to development growth, unethical behaviour and corruption needs to be coupled by changing focus and concentrate on good governance and accountability.

In South Africa after 1994, the inheritance of apartheid government started by heading to the convincing and right direction with institutions and State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) that were sustainable for economic growth and sustainable social development. The old age pensioners or senior citizens were granted pensioner's grants monthly in continuation of what apartheid government has been doing. Hence, blacks' pensioners were earning grants after two months; thus, earning their grants in the third month. Because apartheid was focusing on giving only white people in South Africa

better lives. ANC changed that narrative and pensioners are paid their grants every single month. It has even extended to give disabled citizens and children of unemployed parents extended to those children who are orphans monthly support grants. The major challenge began when public servants became beneficiary of the same grants fraudulently by working with criminals to access government social grants. There were people who were caught with hundreds of those SASSA cards withdrawing money from different ATMS across the country in South Africa (Public Service Commission Report, 2001b). The manner which corruption is taking place with these grants, it is not sustainable.

The same happens with National Students Funding Aid Scheme (NSFAS). There has been maladministration in managing South African NSFAS funds. It has been an eye opener when a student named Sibongile Mani from Walter Sisulu University received R14 million from NSFAS erroneously deposited in her personal account in 2017 (Comins, 2022). The student only was sentenced to jail for 5 years. As society, we are left questioning the public servant who deposited such amount of money in the poor student account. How many other students may be getting such money and not been traced. This alone exposed the corruption taking place in the NSFAS office. The public servant has never been identified and sent for questioning. This shows there is lack of accountability by public servants and lack of governance by management.

The idea of democracy and good governance cannot be sustained without good morals in a society and good leadership ethics that create a stable environment. There was a World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 that showed South Africa's plan for sustainability and development on "good governance" (Sunday Times, 2002). As South African, this comes as personal experience, people in this country drinks alcohol more than enough. This tendency of alcohol hampers progress of many from students at universities/colleges and public servants. This increases high amount of absenteeism at work. It might be because of sickness one feels the next day, or the body not rested enough to work and concentrate at office. There is simply no home for sustainable development goals when elders and youth are practicing the same unethical behaviours and no proper leadership to address such behaviours in a country of high unemployment rate, but youth are drinking heavily not knowing where they

get the money to buy alcohol those who are not employed.

Corruption in third world countries is bad because these are countries that lack resources (Mabunda & Mamokhere, 2023). I would say South Africa has no problem of resources, like most African countries, South Africa has a problem of bad economic policies, bad governance, and corruption. When you calculate how South Africa has sustained SASSA grants, the level of corruption in the public sector, monies said to be exposed on corruption and tender irregularities and private sector companies unlawfully benefitting from government through tenders and corruption, one will come to conclude that South Africa is rich in minerals and is making trillions through collection of Pay as You Earn tax and VAT tax. There is just bad governance and lack of plan for sustainable development goals for better lives to everyone.

#### **4. Promoting Good Governance in South Africa**

The White paper on transformation of public service (WPTPS), 1997 also known as Batho Pele (Putting people first) principles was introduced in 1997 for providing policy framework for transformation of ethical public service provisions. This principle was formed by South African government intends to adopt citizen-orientated approach for provisions of services that is informed by eight principles of consultation, transparency, redress, openness, courtesy, values for money and service standards. That framework enabled good governance and promoted good public administration good ethical standards. That happened during that time and as time goes on, public servants have moved away from the initial mission of Batho Pele principles. The acts of corruption committed by public servants, senior officials and politicians proves that South Africa has moved away from these principles of aimed to contribute to good governance and prevent corruption.

Good governance starts when public servants are well remunerated too. People lose interest and performance lowers when they are not paid well. That will trigger corruption actions and the service delivery will remain ineffective. There is a need to equip public servants with relevant training, better wages and working equipment's to deliver services. The South African government has got rich resources

is suffering from bad governance and challenges of corruption. The ANC is in control of power and deploying their comrades to deliver services and those public servants are part of the previously excluded and marginalised society of black Africans, coloured and Indians.

#### **5. Challenges of Governance, Governmental Agencies and Development in South Africa**

Several scholars have argued that good governance in any nation is the relative absence of corrupt practices in all its ramifications (TAFGN, 2011-2015). The implication of this position is that in a nation where corruption has almost become the norm, such a nation cannot claim to experience good governance. South Africa consists of several Anti-Corruption agencies that aimed at combating corruption for sustainable of development growth. The Special Investigate Unit (SIU) and South African Police Services (SAPS) Anti-Corruption unit are at the forefront to combat corruption. The SIU has been collecting assets from corrupt officials, politicians and those who gained from Lotto NGOs for self-benefit using their NGOs to acquire donations. One of the reasons attributable to the unethical practice of corruption in a nation is weak leadership and lack of accountability of public officials. Commenting on the state of corruption in South Africa, Ikotun (2004) points out that corruption has been converted into statecraft in Nigeria because there has been a failure of leadership and accountability in government. This shows that African countries are facing crisis of corruption and poor governance that affects economic and sustainable development growth negatively. Didia (2007) states that corruption undermines quality of governance and fundamentally runs contrary to accountability. Research has shown that corruption in the activities of public managers of governmental agencies, made it possible for South Africa to suffer the theft of State Capture during former president Zuma's presidential term. Even today, under Ramaphosa's administration, it is still rampant.

#### **6. Independent Electoral Commission**

In the democratic countries, good governance is predicated on proper conduct of election as means of enthroning political leaders in a democratic society. To achieve this noble goal, agency of government is setup to carry out the proper conduct of

elections. But in South Africa and Zimbabwe shows the difference outcome. The existing ANC led government and ZanuPF government from Zimbabwe has repeatedly acting strange on elections results is concerned. Due to same led government organizational leaders, teachers who count votes and other leaders from different countries as guests during elections called friends of the ruling party, contributes to the outcome consistence win of these old movements. A lot of citizens keep rejecting these ruling parties, yet they keep on winning majority votes in the national elections. Africa is known for rigging votes without any opposition party questioning as majority of ballots counting and all proceedings is done by the members of ruling parties. This act of unethical standards deepens corruption in third world countries and keeps same parties to rule even when they fail their citizens through poor governance and crisis of corruption that keeps South Africa on standstill of unsustainable developmental growth.

## 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

The Anti-corruption unit agencies being SIU and SAPS Anti-Corruption unit must be well coordinated and effective to combat corruption and bad governance that impedes the sustainability of development growth in South Africa. The performance of public officials is disrupted and undermined by political leaders and senior officials who daily disrupt their responsibilities by prioritizing their selfish needs first. The public servants are found demoralised and not motivated by government inadequate resources and lower budget allocations accompanied by salaries stagnation over years. The decline of public servants' salaries in South Africa as they are on the fourth year without a decent wage increase affects their moral ethics and effective service delivery. Corruption is started from political leaders, inequalities of past racial segregations and lack of justice also being in office for short term with uncertainty of the next elections will bring them back to office or not. The weaknesses of law and order to punish perpetrators fuels corruption, because public servants, senior officials and politicians have never suffered the consequences of their actions. The whistle blowers perform their job, but they are targeted by perpetrators, and some are being harmed. The state in South Africa lacks determination to allocate budget and protect the whittle blowers. There is lack of ethical standards amongst political leaders and senior as many do

not lead with a good example to public servants and promote the good governance in sustaining developmental growth in South Africa and encourage the rest of African continent. There have been long queues in the department of Home Affairs, and stuff is less when their computers are not operating in required speed and lack of equipment's to perform day to day duties. This shows poor governance as management should have identified this crisis and offered enough resources and services computers for speed service delivery (Msiza, 2020). The services provisions for societies are not priorities as they are operating in rented buildings in the CBD flats and disabled people are unable to move to upper floors when the elevators are not operating due to loadshedding and other faults. The remedies to corruption typically suggested by experts are increasing surveillance, oversight, and sanctions; improving the transparency of public procurement procedures; privatization of state-owned enterprises; and improving the wages and benefits of public-sector workers (Rose-Ackerman & Palifka, 2016). The paper recommends the following:

- The need to societies or public interest should be put first.
- Strengthening disciplinary measures against those who are corrupt and have unethical misconduct which contributes to poor governance.
- The existing Anti-Corruption agencies must deal with everyone without fear and favour.
- Moral ethics in the public sector should consistently be enforced amongst public servants, senior officials, and politicians to build a good relationship with citizens.
- Whistle blowers should be encouraged and be protected to continue with their job and assist the state to catch corruption perpetrators.
- Managers and political leaders should lead by example and contribute to good governance and moral leadership for public servants to follow.
- Any misconduct or acts of corruption big or small committed by public officials and politicians should be punished to set example to anyone who intends to practice the same misconduct in future.



- There should be training on integrity and ethical standards as a priority to educate all office bearers.
- There should be recruitment and retaining of ethical managers in public organizations and remove corrupt managers.
- Avoid privatization of SOEs in South Africa as it will impede economic growth development and unemployment with remain rife as private sector maximises profits and poor citizens may not afford the services.

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# The Challenge of Curriculum Administration by School Management Teams in the General Education and Training Band

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**Abstract:** The curriculum as a core business for ensuring efficiency in any school needs to be managed. Most educational systems' guiding principle is its curriculum, and each nation's educational objectives are only realized to the extent to which the curriculum is successfully implemented. This study investigates challenges faced by school management team (SMT) in administering curriculum in the general education and training band (GET) schools in the Eastern Cape Province. This study adopted a qualitative research approach and a case study research strategy. The study sample entailed eight SMT members from two rural schools in the Eastern Cape Province were purposefully selected with their characteristic of having served as managers for an adequate number of years. Data for this investigation was collected through the use of semi structured interviews. The findings reveal several challenges experienced in the management of the curriculum. These challenges include stress brought on by workload, lack of cooperation by SMT members and limited support from human resource. Conclusions indicate that SMT has to be empowered to be able to handle difficulties encountered in managing curriculum. This study recommends that SMT members need to be capacitated and given all the necessary support for efficiency to manage the prescribed curriculum.

**Keywords:** Education, Curriculum, Management, Teaching and learning, Schooling environment

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## 1. Introduction

Curriculum administration by school management teams in the General Education and Training (GET) band is a critical aspect of educational leadership and governance (Dolph, 2017). School management teams, comprising principals, deputy principals, subject heads, and other key stakeholders, play a vital role in overseeing and implementing the curriculum within their schools. Effective curriculum administration is essential for ensuring the provision of quality education and maximizing student learning outcomes. The GET band encompasses the early years of formal education, including foundation phase (Grades R-3), intermediate phase (Grades 4-6), and senior phase (Grades 7-9) (RSA, Department of Basic Education, 2011). During this stage, students acquire fundamental knowledge, skills, and attitudes that form the basis for their further educational journey. The curriculum serves as a roadmap for teaching and learning, guiding the educational experiences and outcomes of students.

According to Grootenboer and Pendergast (2017), school management teams are responsible for curriculum leadership, making decisions about

curriculum content, pedagogical approaches, and assessment methods. They collaborate with teachers, subject specialists, and other stakeholders to ensure the effective implementation of the curriculum. However, curriculum administration faces various challenges and complexities. Challenges in curriculum administration can arise from the need to align the curriculum with national or regional educational goals, address diverse learner needs, and integrate cross-curricular themes (Blackmore & Bateman, 2017). Limited availability of resources, such as textbooks, technology, and infrastructure, can also hinder curriculum implementation (Dlamini, Mphahlele & Eloff, 2019).

Additionally, the dynamic nature of educational policies and reforms adds complexity to curriculum administration. School management teams must navigate changing policies, guidelines, and assessment requirements, which can create ambiguity and challenges in implementing and managing the curriculum effectively (Kennedy & Verkuilen, 2019). While individual studies have explored specific aspects of curriculum administration or particular challenges, a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by school management teams in



curriculum administration within the GET band is still lacking. This study aims to address this gap by examining the diverse challenges faced by school management teams and identifying the strategies employed to overcome these challenges.

By understanding these challenges and strategies, policymakers, educational leaders, and school management teams can develop targeted interventions and support systems to enhance the effectiveness of curriculum administration and improve student learning outcomes. To help identify such underlying challenges with regards to SMT dynamics, there was a research question to be answered: What are the roles, practices, and challenges faced by school management teams in curriculum administration in the General Education and Training band? This paper is structured in a manner that logically indicates: Literature review; empirical review; roles, responsibilities and challenges of SMT's; investigation of challenges; examination of strategies for curriculum administration; impact on student outcomes; policy and reform dynamics; strategies for effective curriculum administration; theoretical background; transformational leadership theory; distributed leadership theory; research methodology; data collection procedures; findings; conclusions; recommendations and references.

## **2. Literature Review**

In order to successfully administer educational programs and address the different learning needs of pupils, curriculum administration is essential (Margot & Kettler, 2019). School management teams (SMTs) are in charge of managing curriculum administration within the General Education and Training (GET) band (Naidoo, 2019). This includes developing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the curriculum. This section examines the body of research on SMTs in the GET band who oversee curriculum, with an emphasis on their responsibilities, difficulties, and approaches.

### **2.1 Empirical Review**

Empirical research on curriculum administration by school management teams (SMTs) in the General Education and Training (GET) band provides insights into the actual practices, experiences, and outcomes related to curriculum management. This section reviews key empirical studies that have examined various aspects of curriculum administration by SMTs.

#### **2.1.1 Roles, Responsibilities and Challenges of SMT's**

A study conducted by Grootenboer and Pendergast (2017) explored the roles and responsibilities of SMTs in curriculum administration. The findings revealed that SMTs play a central role in curriculum planning, instructional leadership, and assessment practices. They are responsible for aligning curriculum with educational standards, monitoring curriculum implementation, and supporting teachers in adapting instructional strategies to meet students' needs.

Grootenboer and Pendergast (2017) emphasize the important role of school management teams in curriculum leadership. They assert that school management teams are responsible for making decisions about curriculum content, pedagogical approaches, and assessment methods. The study underscores the need for collaboration among school management teams, teachers, and subject specialists to ensure the effective implementation of the curriculum. Several studies have identified challenges faced by school management teams in curriculum administration within the GET band (Caldwell et al., 2021).

Blackmore and Bateman (2017) discuss the challenges of aligning the curriculum with national or regional educational goals and integrating cross-curricular themes. They emphasize the need to address the diverse needs of learners, which can pose additional challenges. In line with the claims above, Dlamini, Mphahlele and Eloff (2019) shed light on the limited availability of resources as a major challenge in curriculum implementation. This includes inadequate access to textbooks, technology, and infrastructure, which can hinder effective curriculum delivery and impact student learning outcomes.

#### **2.1.2 Investigation of Challenges**

An empirical study by Shamu and Tsitsi (2020) focused on the challenges faced by SMTs in curriculum administration. The research identified resource constraints, including limited funding and inadequate learning materials, as significant challenges impacting curriculum implementation. Time constraints, workload pressures, and conflicting administrative demands were also found to hinder effective curriculum management. Additionally, the study highlighted the need for continuous professional development to address the challenges related to teacher expertise and capacity.

### **2.1.3 Examination of Strategies for Curriculum Administration**

Research by Schoch and Muir (2018) investigated strategies employed by successful SMTs in curriculum administration. The study highlighted the importance of collaborative decision-making and shared leadership practices. Effective communication and collaboration among SMT members and teachers were found to enhance curriculum coherence and implementation. The study also emphasized the significance of supportive school cultures that fostered a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for curriculum administration.

### **2.1.4 Impact on Student Outcomes**

An empirical study by Tendai and Machingambi (2021) explored the relationship between curriculum administration by SMTs and student outcomes. The findings indicated that effective curriculum management, including clear curriculum goals, supportive instructional practices, and regular monitoring, positively influenced student achievement and engagement. The study emphasized the crucial role of SMTs in creating a conducive learning environment and ensuring the alignment of curriculum with students' learning needs.

These empirical studies contribute to the understanding of curriculum administration by SMTs in the GET band by providing evidence-based insights into their roles, challenges, and strategies. They highlight the importance of addressing resource constraints, time pressures, and the need for professional development to enhance curriculum implementation (Mestry, 2021). Moreover, the studies emphasize the positive impact of collaborative decision-making, supportive school cultures, and effective communication on curriculum coherence and student outcomes.

Curriculum administration by school management teams in the General Education and Training (GET) band is a complex and multifaceted process that plays a crucial role in shaping educational practices and outcomes (Rasebotsa, 2017). This section provides a comprehensive review of the literature, highlighting relevant studies and their findings related to curriculum administration within the GET band.

### **2.1.5 Policy and Reform Dynamics**

The dynamic nature of educational policies and reforms adds complexity to curriculum administration. Kennedy and Verkuilen (2019) highlight the

challenges faced by school management teams in managing curriculum reforms. They discuss the need to navigate changing policies, guidelines, and assessment requirements, which can create ambiguity and pose implementation challenges. Curriculum administrators, such as school management teams (SMTs), play a key role in translating educational policies and reforms into actionable plans and practices within their schools. Curriculum administration involves the planning, development, implementation, and evaluation of educational programs and curricula within educational institutions (Supriani et al., 2022). This process includes decisions about what students should learn, how it should be taught, and how progress should be assessed.

The dynamic nature of policies and reforms introduces complexity to curriculum administration because administrators must continually adapt to changing guidelines, expectations, and priorities (Pak et al., 2020). As policies and reforms evolve, administrators may need to revise curriculum materials, adjust teaching strategies, implement new assessment methods, and provide professional development for educators to align with the latest requirements. Pak, et al continues to say curriculum administrators must navigate a landscape where policy changes can occur frequently, potentially leading to resource allocation challenges, adjustments in instructional methods, and the need for ongoing training to keep educators informed and prepared.

According to Kennedy and Verkuilen (2019), the dynamic nature of educational policies and reforms means that curriculum administration is not a static process but one that requires continuous adaptation and responsiveness. Curriculum administrators must be prepared to implement changes efficiently and effectively while ensuring that the curriculum remains relevant and aligned with the evolving educational landscape. This dynamic nature adds complexity to the role of curriculum administrators as they strive to provide high-quality education that meets the needs of students and the broader educational goals set by policymakers (Heffernan & Pierpoint, 2020).

### **2.1.6 Strategies for Effective Curriculum Administration**

In addressing the challenges of curriculum administration, researchers have identified various strategies

employed by school management teams. For instance, Grootenboer and Pendergast (2017) suggest that effective collaboration, professional development, and ongoing support for teachers and subject specialists contribute to successful curriculum implementation. Additionally, Dlamini, Mphahlele and Eloff (2019) propose the development of a framework to address curriculum implementation challenges. The framework emphasizes the importance of creating supportive school environments, engaging stakeholders, and providing resources to enhance curriculum delivery.

## **2.2 Theoretical Background**

The theoretical background of curriculum administration by school management teams (SMTs) in the General Education and Training (GET) band is rooted in educational leadership and management theories. This section presents key theoretical frameworks that inform the understanding of curriculum administration and its implications for educational practice.

### **2.2.1 Transformational Leadership Theory**

Transformational leadership theory, proposed by Bass and Avolio (1994), emphasizes the role of leaders in inspiring and motivating followers to achieve higher levels of performance and personal growth. Within the context of curriculum administration, transformational leadership theory posits that SMTs can exert a positive influence on teachers and other stakeholders by fostering a shared vision, promoting collaboration, and providing support and guidance (Bredeson, 2017). This leadership approach enhances the implementation and management of the curriculum by creating an environment that encourages innovation, professional development, and continuous improvement (Leithwood et al., 2004).

### **2.2.2 Distributed Leadership Theory**

Distributed leadership theory suggests that leadership is not limited to formal roles or positions but is distributed among individuals within an organization (Spillane et al., 2004). In the context of curriculum administration, distributed leadership recognizes that SMTs alone cannot effectively manage the complexities of curriculum implementation and adaptation. Instead, it emphasizes the importance of collaboration, shared decision-making, and the involvement of various stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and community members (Harris, 2016).

By distributing leadership responsibilities, SMTs can tap into the expertise and perspectives of diverse stakeholders, leading to more effective curriculum administration and improved student outcomes (Hargreaves & Fink, 2018).

By drawing on these theoretical frameworks, researchers and practitioners gain insights into the underlying principles and concepts that shape curriculum administration by SMTs in the GET band. These theories provide a lens through which to examine the roles, challenges, and strategies related to curriculum administration, and inform the development of effective practices and policies to support curriculum implementation and management.

## **3. Research Methodology**

This study's methodology entails a case study research strategy and a qualitative approach for both data collection and analysis. According to Bless et al. (2013), qualitative research is defined as study that records and examines elements of social reality through the use of qualifying words and descriptions. Case study as a research design was used for the close assessment of this study. A case study is a comprehensive analysis that follows an individual or group of individuals over time (Creswell, 2013). Through the use of case studies and exploratory analysis, the researchers were able to gain a deeper knowledge of the issue by looking at how the SMTs handle the curriculum in a real-world setting. Two schools were selected to investigate the specifics of curriculum administration procedures. Eight school management team members as the nominated participants consisted of two HoDs, one deputy principal and one school principal (four SMT's) from each research site participated in this study. Purposive sampling was used for the selection of the two schools and the participants. The selected participants were identified as relevant due to the information they had attained within the vast number of years employed in management positions.

### **3.1 Data Collection Procedures**

Semi-structured interviews were the method of data gathering that was employed. Interviews that are semi-structured do not precisely follow a pre-established list of questions from the interviewer (Isaksen et al., 2022). These interviews follow an informal

tone and have a flexible format. Because it enables respondents to provide more in-depth answers based on the questions from the reflective activity, the semi-structured interview was determined by the researchers to be the most appropriate method for this study. The benefit of semi-structured interviews is that primary and authentic data are acquired from respondents since they involve a live contact between the interviewer and the respondent (Ruslin, 2022). This allows for more open discussions and probing questions, enabling both the interviewer and the interviewee to delve deeper into questioning and responding to the explored underlying problem. Responses from the interview were transcribed verbatim and form narratives. This interview was undertaken over a two-month period in order to record participant replies. Since both sides were employees and had individual work schedules that needed to be followed. Informed consent was given to all the participants, and participants voluntarily participated in this study. Data were analysed thematically. By using content analysis to gather the data for the test, it was possible to analyse the meanings and connections between the responses. Following this, the results were grouped into categories, which were then coded into themes. The sub-section below discusses the themes that emerged as findings.

## 4. Results and Discussion

The researchers compared the responses of all the participating SMT members in order to draw conclusions on commonalities. Emerging themes were found as data was presented then examined. According to information acquired from interviews about the curriculum administration by school management teams in the general education and training band, the following categories should be attended to: Roles, Responsibilities and Challenges; examination of strategies for curriculum administration; impact on student outcomes; policy and reform dynamics; strategies for effective curriculum administration.

### 4.1 Roles, Responsibilities and Challenges

SMT members play a central role in curriculum planning, instructional leadership, and assessment practices. The findings correspond with the findings by Grootenboer and Pendergast (2017) who emphasized the important role of school management teams in curriculum leadership. Five members

embraced a common belief. In this instance, when the researcher asked about their roles and responsibilities as SMT's, Principal of school A stated that:

*"As far as I know, the major role of SMT is to ensure that effective teaching and learning takes place."*

Furthermore, this P-A stated that:

*"Since we are expected to teach as SMT's then, our role as managers will always be compromised as curriculum administrators."*

This response was also demonstrated by Principal of school B who when asked about the challenges faced by SMT's, she retorted that:

*"It is always not easy to meet the expectations of supervising each staff member to check and confirm if they are delivering well prepared lessons plans to our students due to time constraints. I am a teacher who must go to class and teach whilst at the same time I must manage curriculum" [P-B].*

The above result demonstrates that each SMT member is assigned certain tasks, functions, and responsibilities under the terms of reference. Even while SMT members assert that they are familiar with their terms of reference, data gathered from the five GET schools has revealed that the majority of SMT members are unsure of their responsibilities.

The majority of SMT members from schools A SMT through school B SMT indicated that the terms of reference are followed as a guide by using the education and policy handbook. The common theme in their answers, though, is that each school's unique circumstances further refine the terms of reference.

The results show that one conspicuous shortcoming is the absence of in-service training for team members prior to or following the assumption of promotion jobs. For instance, the Deputy principal of school B said:

*"Being an all-rounder in the deputy principal's position can make it difficult to grasp exactly what your responsibilities are" [DP-B].*

It can be inferred from the comments that the curriculum administrators are faced with workload pressures as a challenge and with local district



education officials appear to pay special attention to school principals. Participants in this study are distinctly of the opinion that District authorities need to take other SMT members seriously in addition to school principals. This will give the SMTs the chance to get in-depth training in a variety of areas related to their complex work, which may include the terms of reference. That gesture being implemented would encourage ownership and shared responsibility for including school cultures that fostered a sense of cooperation among curriculum administrators.

The interviewees complained about the district officials who come and go giving the schools no feedback, the support they get from the curriculum section is not enough. The personnel from the local District office are there to confer development and support to HoDs. Heads of Department are the department's source of reservoir for future school principals and as such they must be preserved. Sidelining the HoDs and putting more emphasis only on school principals was raised as an issue of concern to HoDs and it was viewed as a practice that must be changed to enhance cooperation from curriculum administrators.

The lack of development and assistance from the district office was a recurring concern among the HoDs questioned. The findings indicate that the district office staff is falling short of their key goal of developing SMTs. Head of the school's department A portrayed this as a challenge and confirms that SMTs experience this kind of difficulty when she said:

*"Only when there is a conflict do the EDOs visit our school" [HoD-A1].*

HoD-A1 further goes on to say:

*"We would appreciate if these EDO's would come to enquire from us about the digital technological skills gap instead of that". [HoD-A1]*

According to the researcher, Departmental representatives must always support SMTs fully. The Departmental officials' occasional support of SMTs will perpetually demoralize the majority of schools.

The multiplicity of roles assigned to the SMT has been problematic, according to almost all of the

SMT members surveyed. Accountability is the overarching concept. The problem is that the principal is the school's accounting officer, thus he or she is responsible for all accountabilities. Since management requires teamwork yet responsibility is handled by one person, this position as an accounting officer weakens and threatens collaboration (Basson & Mestry, 2019). Analogous responses were given by the participants to the query about their involvement in various roles. Deputy Principals are just as busy as school principals, according to the research. When asked about their experiences playing many roles, the HoDs' answers were consistent. The data show that support systems, which will have resources, are necessary.

Another issue cited as a challenge for SMTs is their heavy workloads. SMTs identified increased paperwork and the need to be attentive to everyone as being particularly difficult. Concerns regarding the work itself, dealing with teacher problems, student problems, and parent concerns were represented in the majority of SMT responses. It is confusing to complete multiple things at once in a piecemeal approach with frequent interruptions. Stress-related absences by SMT members were found to be detrimental to the school's development. The results of this investigation supported the detrimental impact mentioned in the evaluated literature. Teachers who are overworked typically produce less. Overworked SMT members also perform poorly (Ruslin, 2022).

#### **4.2 Strategies for Effective Curriculum Administration**

The study conducted by Schoch and Muir (2018) highlighted the importance of collaboration in decision-making and shared leadership practices. Principals offered examples of when lack of cooperation is evident. They attributed the SMT's lack of collaboration to differences in viewpoint, competing goals, political issues, and laziness. Principal of school B was captured well where she said:

*"There will always be disagreements and personality conflicts where people are involved. It's possible for issues to spread from one employee to another and these interpersonal conflicts would sway us off from administering effective curriculum if these interpersonal conflicts are not resolved correctly" [P-B].*

Principal of school A qualified the comments made by Principal of school B where he said:

*"If we can follow and adhere strictly to Departmental policies as a strategy in curriculum administration, there would be no distinct conflicts" [P-A].*

According to other viewpoints, cooperation makes it possible to share opinions and duties. According to some administrators, collaboration lessens workloads and is essential to enabling others for efficient school operations. On the other hand, the principals offered examples of when there is a lack of cooperation. They gave various reasons for the lack of cooperation inside the SMT, including disagreements of opinion, competing goals, political concerns, and laziness.

*"There will always be disagreements of opinion and personality conflicts in situations involving people. There may be issues that spread from one employee to another, there may be interpersonal conflicts that cannot be adequately resolved, and there may be conflicting objectives" [P-B].*

### 4.3 Policy and Reform Dynamics

The findings of this study were consistent with the findings by Kennedy and Verkuilen (2019), who advanced that educational policies and reforms are dynamic in nature and this means that curriculum administration is not a static process but one that requires continuous adaptation and responsiveness. In this instance when SMT's were asked about their views with regard to latest developments in curriculum administration, Head of Department of school A (HoD-A) said:

*"As leaders of the school we have to provide professional development to our educators so that they toe the line and align their teaching pedagogies with the latest approaches".*

This Head of Department further went on to make some comments regarding the gap the SMT's might have with regard to computer literacy skills whilst they are the ones who must lead by example. This is what (HoD-A) said:

*"We are expected to make use of computers to download CAPS documents, Annual teaching plans, lesson plans, emails, circulars and other documents from the computer and we were never*

*trained on these computers even though they were given to us 6 years ago in 2017, only school principals were invited by DBE for computer training" [HoD-A].*

Deputy Principal of school A concluded by saying that:

*"SMT's are policy implementors and as the policy is changing, we must as well change and thorough training is necessary for us to adapt as policy is dynamic, we have two options, it is either we get into the ship, or we perish." [DP-A].*

### 4.4 Impact on Student Outcomes

Effective curriculum administration, including clear curriculum goals, supportive instructional practices, and regular monitoring, all these are directly related to impact positively to student outcomes. The findings of this article correspond well to the study conducted by Tendai and Machingambi (2021) who explored the relationship between curriculum administration by SMTs and student outcomes. The comments made by some of the SMT members are testifying the crucial role of SMT's in creating a conducive learning environment and ensuring the alignment of curriculum with students' learning needs. This fact is being attested to by Deputy Principal of school B who said:

*"As SMT's we may come up with school policies like assessment policy and agree with all the subject teachers that in each subject as SMT's we expect for example two formal assessment tests monthly" [DP-B].*

Principal of school A qualifies this sentiment of DP-A when he said:

*"School policies that are in line with the DBE policies must be communicated by curriculum administrators (SMT's) to all stake holders, like students, parents, SGB's" [DP-A].*

He further goes on to say that:

*"If in the school year plan the assessment dates are clearly communicated, that would enable our teachers to prepare well in advance having a targeted milestone to achieve which would at the end boost students results in terms of performance" [DP-A].*



HoD-A1 said:

*"Class visits by SMT's must be communicated to school stakeholders through the school policy so that our teachers are not surprised when we are monitoring their work, and that exercise would benefit the student outcomes positively" [HoD-A1].*

The findings are conforming well with the aim of this study which solicited to understand comprehensively the challenges facing SMTs in curriculum administration in the GET band schools. The diverse strategies to overcome these challenges faced by school management teams were examined and identified through the lens of transformational leadership theory which emphasizes the role of leaders in inspiring and motivating followers to achieve higher levels of performance and personal growth. Within the context of curriculum administration, transformational leadership theory posits that SMTs can exert a positive influence on teachers and other stakeholders by fostering a shared vision, promoting collaboration, and providing support and guidance (Ndlanya, 2022). The study of the literature showed that Department of Basic Education (DBE) interventions, subject advisor provision, and good communication were realistic responses to curricular administration challenges. Based on the literature research, the degree of support during curriculum implementation was influenced by various aspects such as the kind of setting, culture, size of the institution, availability of resources, capacity, and personal characteristics of the teaching staff and school administrators. In the context of curriculum administration, distributed leadership recognizes that SMTs alone cannot effectively manage the complexities of curriculum implementation and adaptation. Instead, it emphasizes the importance of collaboration, shared decision-making, and the involvement of various stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and community members (Sasere & Makhasane, 2023).

## **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

Most participants were eager to talk to the researcher about their experiences, sometimes without being prodded. The data also showed that not all SMT members were as definite and explicit about their terms of reference as was anticipated. One of the main conclusions is that in order to properly manage their various schools, principals and other SMT members do not collaborate as a team. Without a question, there is a critical need

to develop SMTs in order to provide them with the skills necessary to handle the issues they are currently confronting. However, given the results of this study, it is clear that educational management in South Africa need more focus.

The several factors mentioned above suggest that SMT members have a limited comprehension of their positions in school administration. True team management will not exist in South African education until this understanding is developed. The study's goal was to identify issue areas so that programs and interventions can be developed to help SMTs who still lack the confidence to take charge in their schools. Given that a principal is not only responsible for the curriculum administration of a school, SMT challenges deserve attention.

The study concludes that SMTs require extensive school management training with regard to their work and also be trained thoroughly on how to use digital technology in teaching and learning. The researcher has observed that the participants were agreeing with HoD-A2 when echoing digital skills gap. To keep SMTs up to date on their responsibilities, the DBE must hold frequent workshops and seminars for SMT members.

Based on the findings, the researcher recommends and suggests that HoDs receive training in the administration of curriculum implementation in light of this important discovery, which tackles incompetence in the management of curriculum implementation. With this training, HoDs in schools will probably be able to handle curriculum in a different way that benefits all students. An organization's management style influences its success. Effective plans that are well-organized, closely watched will in no doubt benefit the student outcomes. SMT's as curriculum administrators, must oversee people, processes, and systems to guarantee effective teaching and learning that raises student accomplishment levels in a classroom.

Given the reputation of schools as catalysts for social change, the SMT is seen as the centre of these reform efforts. It is expected of the SMT to use their administrative abilities to implement this transformation in the educational system and adapt to this important obligation. Leaders who continue to grow personally and bring growth to their organizations will influence many and develop a successful team around them (Maxwell, 2018). The researcher suggests that HoDs

receive comprehensive training through workshops on leadership programs in curriculum implementation in order to address the major issue, which pertains to leadership incompetence in curriculum implementation. Transformative, instructive, and distributive leadership should all be a part of these leadership programs. The leadership competencies of the HoDs would help to enhance the performance of educators and students in primary school curriculum implementation roles.

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# Electrical Technology Teachers' Experiences of Teaching Programmable Logic Controllers in Selected Secondary Schools in the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa

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**Abstract:** The current and revised Electrical Technology (ET) curriculum has been tailored to cater to the skills that ensure the delivery of knowledge in a more visible and systematic approach that learners can easily follow. The study focused on understanding the experiences of ET teachers in teaching Programmable Logic Controllers (PLC) topics in their classrooms, with the purpose of determining the successes and difficulties experienced during the implementation process. A narrative review of the study using the interpretive case study method was used. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data qualitatively. A pragmatic sample of purposively selected five ET subject teachers from five geographically linked case study schools was chosen. The interviews, which were conducted in accordance with the study goals, were analysed using a thematic-based approach. The findings of the study revealed that teachers received inadequate training when the curriculum was revised and when the PLC was added to the content of ET and this negatively affected the implementation of the PLC and its practical activities. Another finding that had a negative impact on the teaching of the topic was the lack of infrastructure and resources in schools to facilitate effective implementation. The study suggests that well-equipped infrastructure, as well as suitable teaching and learning support material, be provided so that teachers may properly teach the topic with comfort and confidence. Continuing professional development courses are also recommended for teachers to keep up with all the ET fundamentals and concepts.

**Keywords:** Programmable Logic Controllers, Electrical technology, Technology subjects, Revised curriculum, Curriculum implementation

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## 1. Introduction

Changes and advancements in technical and technology education have accelerated in recent years and the growth of technology teaching has significantly transformed the ways that teachers perform teaching and learning (Raja & Nagasubramani, 2018). The technical and technology curriculum, which is a component of a national framework for education, aims to enhance educational capacity for embracing and adapting to the country's technological advances while also equipping learners with the necessary abilities and skills to satisfy the demands of the workplace (Alotaibi & Alshehri, 2023). As a result of that, technical high school education needs to create trained learners who are prepared to work in the business and manufacturing fields. Okolocha and Baba (2016) emphasized that technical and technology education equips learners to become self-reliant and seize job opportunities by developing skills, choosing careers, adapting to work environments, and mastering their chosen field of expertise.

One of the topics covered in ET curricula is the Programmable Logic Controller (PLC). This is a digital computer that is used to automate electromechanical activities that are commonly found in industrial settings, such as lighting fixtures, amusement attractions, and factory assembly lines (da Fonseca & Pinto, 2019). PLCs are utilized by numerous machines and sectors of the economy. Hudedmani, Umayal, Kabberalli and Hittalamani (2017) define a PLC as a type of digital industrial computer device that is regularly used in the process of manufacturing. Learning about PLCs is very important, especially for technical high school learners. Researchers claim that the growth of PLCs in the industrial world lags behind the teaching of PLCs in technical high schools (Chookeaw, Howimanporn & Sootkaneung, 2019; Smajic, Sanli & Wessel, 2021; Chen, Liu & Huang, 2023).

## 2. Background

The use of automated mechanisms for manufacturing machines is one of the technical breakthroughs in the business that could have an effect on raising

both the quantity and the standard of production (Salkin, Oner, Ustundag & Cevikcan, 2018). In order to fulfill a demand, a learner learns the skills of programming digital circuits using integrated circuits (García-Peñalvo, Reimann & Maday, 2018). Following the completion of secondary school, the learner who studied digital electronics may look for an engineering job while pursuing their university careers, this time with the necessary combinations of subjects to achieve admission. Future learners may explore career options in fields including, design systems in manufacturing, digital engineering, programming in information technology, as well as the film design industry using special effects in computer graphics and robotics. Since the practices of teachers are central to the implementation of curriculum (Voogt, Pieters & Handelzalts, 2018), the focus of the paper is to determine the experiences of ET teachers in teaching PLC.

New content has been introduced as part of the change of the ET curriculum from Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) to the revised CAPS, and some of the topics from the NATED550 syllabus were added as well (Ankiewicz, 2021). Since most teachers obtained their qualifications before the new topics were added or were never trained using the creative approaches of the new ET pedagogy, this curriculum change has had a negative impact on them (Putwain & von der Embse, 2019), and difficulties with implementing the revised curriculum have been reported (Cotton, 2019). The implementation of the curriculum is seriously threatened by teachers' willingness to alter their practices and methods of instruction. According to Cross (2012), some teachers believe it is simpler to stick with traditional methods of instruction rather than concentrate on the added content (Schmoker, 2018).

### **3. Research Objective**

The study's objective is to delve more into how teachers in the selected schools of the Amathole East Education District experienced teaching PLCs under the revised ET curriculum.

### **4. Statement of the Problem**

The implementation of the revised CAPS faced obstacles, such as insufficient in-service training, a lack of understanding of curriculum adjustments, limited teacher involvement in curriculum development, and resource constraints (Ngwenya, Sithole &

Okoli, 2020; Ndou, 2022; Ralebese, Loyiso & Chimbi, 2022). The five-day teacher workshop approach suggested by Ashrafuzzaman (2018) proved inadequate, as it lacked depth for ET teachers at various levels. According to Mothowanaga and Gladwin (2021), the Department of Basic Education did little to prepare teachers for the new curriculum, leading to challenges in teaching concepts like PLCs.

While various studies have examined the revised curriculum, there is a scarcity of research on how South African ET teachers implement it, especially in the context of technology and technical subjects (Mkaza, 2021; Govender, 2018; Maharajh, Nkosi & Mkhize, 2016; Bantwini, 2010). This study primarily focuses on the experiences of teachers who directly teach PLCs in selected secondary schools in the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa. Recognizing the pivotal role of teachers' pedagogy in curriculum implementation (Izci, 2017; Shernoff, Sinha, Bressler & Ginsburg, 2017), this research delves into the experiences of ET teachers in teaching PLCs.

## **5. Research Questions**

- What are the experiences of ET teachers in teaching PLCs?
- What are the teaching approaches and strategies used in the teaching of the PLCs?

## **6. Literature Review**

### **6.1 ET Curriculum in Schools**

ET is one of the subjects in technology education that tries to provide learners with a firm foundation of electronic, electrical, and digital skills and concepts (Sumalinog, Sal, Carnicer, Coletto, Dumaguit & Torio, 2022). It prepares learners to demonstrate the technological expertise, knowledge, and skills needed for installing, operating, maintaining, and repairing electrical and electronic equipment. Its goal is to help learners understand and put electrical and electronic principles into practice (Department of Basic Education, 2014). This subject includes workshop procedures, housekeeping, first aid, safe work procedures, circuit diagram analysis, circuit component shopping, testing and assembling, circuit installation, and circuit troubleshooting. ET focuses on Electrical (Power Systems), Electronics, and Digital Electronics which form three main areas of specialisation (Department of Basic Education, 2014).



ET falls in the Engineering and Technology learning field and gives learners the opportunity to solve problems by practically carrying out simulations and doing real-life projects, using a variety of processes and skills where PLC forms part of the said content.

ET refers to a curriculum that is able to improve the level of competency of learners and is intended to help them choose their future careers when they enroll in higher education institutions (Mgetyana, 2022). This is a subject that helps learners get ready to enter apprenticeship opportunities and programs of trade as well as opportunities for specialised job or occupational workplace training (Department of Basic Education, 2014). It lays the groundwork for a thorough, comprehensive education that fits the needs of learners and prepares them for future employment. Another focus is on the incorporation of high knowledge and high skills, focusing on the principles and concepts embedded in ET. The foundation and drive for the subject is its technological process where learners are developed holistically in the profession by developing their creativity, inventiveness, and cleverness.

## 6.2 Curriculum Change to Support Effective Teaching

Curriculum changes are driven by political, economic, and societal factors (Hodson, 2020). Adapting to curriculum revision is essential to meet the evolving demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as highlighted by Malik (2018), who stresses the need for highly qualified teachers in our rapidly changing world. Curriculum implementation isn't a one-time event but a continuous process that involves the entire school community working collectively toward improvement (Malik, 2018). Curriculum changes affect teaching methods, school management, and various processes (Aziz, Mahmood & Rehman, 2018). Effective curriculum management necessitates aligning current practices with the revised curriculum's goals and structures (Cheng, 2022). South Africa's constitution justifies curriculum revisions, with the technology curriculum being updated in 2014 (Mgetyana, 2022). The ultimate aim is to rectify the legacy of apartheid education by imparting deep knowledge, standards, and teacher training for the betterment of society (Phaiphai, 2020).

Empowering individuals through trust, respect, and ownership facilitates change (Bonner, Diehl & Trachtman, 2020). Teachers' pedagogical content

knowledge, experience, and progressiveness greatly influence learners' academic success (Kali, Sagy, Benichou, Atias & Levin-Peled, 2019). To optimize teacher-learner collaboration, support and guidance in teaching and learning are crucial. Teachers should consider various teaching guidelines and approaches to enhance their teaching practices (Lee & Perret, 2022). It's important to provide learners with learning opportunities that build on their existing technological knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Lee & Perret, 2022). However, concerns persist about the lack of training, pedagogical knowledge, and the use of diverse teaching techniques among teachers, as highlighted by Fuad, Ariyani, Suyanto & Shidiq (2020); Tanak (2020), and Van Driel (2021).

## 6.3 PLC as Part of the Curriculum

According to the National Electrical Manufacturer Association (NEMA), PLCs are digital electronic devices that use programmable memories to store instructions and carry out specialised activities including logic, sequencing, timers, counters, and arithmetic to control machinery and processes (Noor & Nasir, 2020). The PLC analyzes the input signals and controls the output signals in accordance with the user-written program (Chen, Liu & Huang, 2023).

In-depth knowledge and skills are crucial for preparing learners for the implementation of PLC tools. According to the study results ET learners still have very little understanding of PLC programming concepts. This is due to the fact that it is simpler for learners to comprehend the curriculum through actual practice than it is to do so merely theoretically (Gamble, 2016) programming skills for PLCs. Every ET learner should be competent in PLC programming, particularly if they intend to pursue a career in the field of industry automation in the future. This is important, especially when considering how practical learning for PLC programming varies. Teachers are required to be more attentive when performing practical skills with learners as it involves more safety issues. It calls for a lot of practical skills training and continual skill development. Its equipment is much more expensive and scarce in stores (Hudedmani, Umayal, Kabberalli & Hittalamani, 2017).

## 6.4 Teachers' Experiences of the Revised Curriculum

Curriculum revision is a gradual process, not an overnight event. The success of implementing change in



a school depends largely on effective school management, as it plays a central role in the school's operations (Radó, 2020). Educational leaders should drive change actively rather than passively following it (Mintrop, 2020). An effective curriculum should align with the culture, society, and the needs of those it serves, leading to a continuous process of evaluation, revision, and adaptation (Pfannkuch, 2018). Many scholars have explored teachers' practices and emphasized their unique characteristics, including subject-matter expertise, pedagogical content knowledge, teaching beliefs, and self-efficacy (Casey & MacPhail, 2018; Berger, Girardet, Vaudroz & Crahay, 2018; Ottenbreit-Leftwich, Liao, Sadik & Ertmer, 2018; Wyatt, 2018). However, some argue that these views may overly focus on individual teachers and not enough on the broader institutional and social context (Trowler, 2019; Burgh & Thornton, 2021; Yip, Huang & Teng, 2022).

Since 2016, South African Technical Secondary schools have been gradually adopting the updated ET curriculum. Teachers are still adjusting to the curriculum changes and requirements. Suwaed and Rahouma (2015) highlighted that change is a process, and it's a personal experience for teachers. They go through phases in how they perceive and adapt to the changes and address questions from content knowledge to effective teaching methods and their learners' progress.

## **7. Theoretical Literature**

A theoretical framework serves as the structural underpinning capable of accommodating a theory. This framework is comprised of well-defined concepts, complete with corresponding definitions, and references to the pertinent academic literature that underpins the theory employed in a specific study, as outlined by Harris, Green and Elshaug (2017). Within this framework, a researcher establishes a comprehension of essential concepts relevant to the study's subject matter. The presence of a theoretical framework serves as a constraint, ensuring that the researcher refrains from making sweeping generalizations about the observed phenomenon, instead abiding by the defined boundaries of those generalizations.

### **7.1 Experiential Learning Theory (ELT)**

This study is underpinned by Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), developed by David Kolb in 1984. ELT

focuses on learning through hands-on experiences and provides a framework to examine how teachers impart PLC knowledge in their classrooms and how this impacts their teaching, as well as how they derive knowledge through reflection. ELT asserts that learning is an active process that stems from personal experiences and reflection. Kolb suggests that effective learning involves a continuous cycle of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conception, and active experimentation.

In the concrete experience phase, teachers and learners engage in hands-on activities related to PLC systems, programming tasks, or troubleshooting exercises in ET teaching, gaining new insights. Subsequently, teachers reflect on these experiences, considering the success of their teaching methods, learner responses, and any challenges faced during practical activities. Moving to the next phase, teachers interpret their experiences by connecting them to existing knowledge, theories, and conceptual frameworks. For example, when teaching PLCs, teachers may analyse their observations in relation to established principles in ET, programming, or pedagogy. In the final phase of the learning cycle, the insights gained from reflection and abstract conceptualization are applied to tackle new situations in the real world. Teachers may need to adapt their teaching approaches, create new instructional materials, or adjust their strategies based on the lessons learned from past experiences.

## **8. Research Methodology**

The study, which used an interpretive qualitative research approach, chose five out of eight Technical Secondary Schools from the Amathole East Education District. The selection of teachers for this study was based on the common criterion that all of them are teachers specialising in ET. In contrast, ET is taught at the Further Education and Training (FET) level from grades 10 to 12 and concentrates on the main areas of specialisation. The purposive sampling approach was used to select participants who would effectively meet the objectives of the study and meet several desirable characteristics for the required knowledge (Shahroni, Minghat & Mustakim, 2022). The researcher only included teachers who have been teaching ET to learners in grades 10 through 12 since 2016. To learn in-depth information and learn more about the teachers' experiences and views in teaching PLCs in their classrooms, a case study design was adopted.

The researcher performed audio-recorded semi-structured interviews with participants to collect qualitative data. Additionally, diary notes have been obtained in order to improve the data. On the day of the interview, every teacher was made aware of the objectives of the study as well as their voluntary participation in data collection. They were informed of their rights to participate and how the results would be utilized. Before the semi-structured interview began, consent to record the session was obtained in order for the researcher to ensure the researcher may listen to the information repeatedly and write down the recorded interview in text for data analysis and discussion. Each of the interviews lasted for between 30 and 50 minutes.

The participants' responses that were recorded and reviewed served as the basis for the analysis and recommendations. Direct quotes from the participants were used to support the narrative presentation of the data. Following verbatim transcription, the data was split and arranged into ordered themes in order to create a meaning and sense of the data collected in a methodical yet adaptable way. To protect the identities of teachers and institutions, pseudonyms are utilized. The names of the teachers are described using the pseudonyms T1 through T5. Additionally, grammatical flaws in interview transcripts were edited without affecting the teachers' actual remarks.

## 9. Results and Discussions

In this study, data were analyzed in such a way that all responses from the participants were comparable and were gathered together and afterward placed in common categories that made up themes. The results presented in the following paragraphs explain the themes that emerged. The themes are curriculum and content understanding of the PLC topic, challenges in teaching the PLCs and resources and learning support material.

### 9.1 Curriculum and Content Understanding of the PLC Topic

The responses from the participants highlighted that ET teachers encounter challenges related to their limited pedagogical content knowledge when teaching PLC in their classrooms. Nearly all participants acknowledged their difficulties in both understanding PLCs and devising effective teaching strategies for practical activities. The Department of Education only conducted brief three-day workshops that

provided limited coverage of the revised topic. This inadequate support for reskilling and training during the curriculum revision process was a significant shortcoming. As pointed out by Manyage, Sithubi, Mudau and Ravhuhali (2022), the training approach assumed a one-size-fits-all strategy and approach, which led to additional issues, considering that pedagogical knowledge and subject matter expertise vary significantly in different contexts and depths.

Following are some of the participant's comments:

*"My Electrical Technology learners have not yet gotten used to the topic, and since it was introduced, people now perceive the subject as being challenging to comprehend. I find the topic incredibly tough and complicated for both me to teach and for learners to learn as it requires learners to think carefully and creatively when responding to the tasks given to them on the topic," stated T2.*

T3 also responded by saying:

*"Teaching Electrical Technology is easy but requires someone to have a thorough understanding of the content... my learners show lack of foundation knowledge and basic understanding of PLC concepts. The topic requires me as a teacher to have software installed on my personal computer so that I can be able to practice practically even before going to class".*

T5 was concerned about a number of things, including the lack of electricity in the community.

*"There is no electricity in the community and there are no school computers or enough resources to help me demonstrate the content as it requires a lot of practical activities. I really battle when it is time to teach the PLCs chapter... I struggle a lot... but I usually take my learners to the nearby technical school when it is time to teach this topic in term 3" (T4).*

Since teachers need to conduct demonstrations and practical exercises (simulations), electrical supply is one of the essential elements for the successful implementation of technical subjects. According to Abdullah (2019), Day, Sahota and Christian (2019) and Madani (2019), the availability and excellence of resource material and the availability of appropriate facilities have a great influence on curriculum implementation.

ET is part of technical subjects which includes both theoretical and practical components and involves hands-on application. Because of this, teachers must make sure that they have measures in place to assist their learners in completing the practical component of their education, particularly the Practical Assessment Tasks (PAT). All schools have experienced issues with either insufficient or non-existent resources. Other resources were reportedly in poor condition, making it impossible for teachers to use them as most of them depend on an electricity supply.

## 9.2 Challenges in Teaching the PLC

The researcher conducted interviews with ET teachers to identify challenges when teaching PLC. T1 provided insight on problems in teaching practical activities to learners where she only does demonstrations using downloaded videos.

*"I usually download videos to demonstrate to my learners so that they can have a clue and understanding of what PLCs are... Because we are short of resources here at school".*

T2 also emphasizes the problems when teaching the PLCs in the classroom.

*My learners usually struggle to understand the basic knowledge of PLC and due to poor learning... and I can say poor learning because I really do not understand the content of the topic. I always rely on social media in order to be able to teach it. I do not get any support from my HOD and my school principal... they are always complaining about the cost of providing PLC software.*

T4 responded.

*"The lack of our managers' attention regarding the provision of teaching aids, results in less effective learning activities because the existing PLC resources that we have do not correspond to the total number of learners and do not have computers to connect to".*

The information above is the foundation for the PLC resources that need to be made available to the ET classroom to support the practical learning process, and it is based on the opinions of the teachers. PLC resources must be ready to address issues that might come up when teaching and learning. Resources can be utilized to stimulate learner the

interest of learners and raise their academic performance. During the teaching and learning process, methods for instruction must be used to ensure that learners fully understand what teachers are explaining. Practical learning activities make up the majority of the curriculum in technical high schools. Therefore, teachers must create engaging, straightforward, and inspiring learning environments in order to meet learning objectives. They must choose the most advantageous strategies, approaches, models, and learning methodologies to do this.

## 9.3 Resources and Learning Support Material

Resources for teaching and learning were identified as the most important forms of support for teachers. Some of the teachers' comments are captured in the quotes that follow:

*"Our Department of Basic Education and school principals must work together to make sure that resources are delivered to schools on time... They are insufficient, particularly in our rural schools where teachers must employ creative methods to motivate learners to learn" (T1).*

According to T2:

*"The government does not equally distribute sufficient resources to all schools."*

*"Resources have always been an issue and still are today because not all schools receive an adequate amount of funding from the government. These are the primary elements, in my opinion, that influence how challenging it is to teach this subject... Additionally, we require extensive instruction on how to use these resources once they are made available to us" (T3).*

T4's response was:

*"Resources for our schools must be delivered on time by our government. In particular, they are not sufficient at all for our rural schools. There are a lot of learners in our classrooms, and we lack a lot of tools and resources. The government does not provide them to all schools... we are really in trouble".*

*"Resources are available, but they are not enough... look this topic demands a lot of practical work for me as a teacher to allow my learners to understand better. If my school resources are not enough,*

then how will my managers and the Department of Education expect good results?"(T5).

The effective delivery of the curriculum is greatly influenced by the accessibility of materials. This is emphasized by Vinnervik (2022), who contends that teachers must have access to curricular guidelines, materials, and in-service training that is related to the academic program.

## 10. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study aimed to investigate the experiences of teachers in selected schools within the Amathole East Education District when teaching PLCs under the revised ET curriculum. According to the literature, ET teachers should possess content expertise and pedagogical subject abilities after in-service training and become subject specialists. However, participants noted that the training they received did not adequately address content knowledge development, a concern given its importance in shaping future ET teachers' knowledge base. Implementing a revised curriculum is often a complex and challenging process, with unforeseen consequences (Buthelezi, 2018). The complexity of this process can make predicting success challenging (Romiszowski, 2016; Nicholls, 2018). Teachers faced challenges with the introduction of the revised curriculum, primarily due to inadequate in-service training. While they attended workshops, they felt that these were insufficient in helping them grasp new concepts. Teachers expressed a greater interest in the informal support networks formed during these workshops.

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) has the demanding task of providing essential resources to disadvantaged (rural) schools. Despite challenges related to infrastructure and resources for practical activities, teachers showed commitment to effectively implementing the new curriculum content. The study highlights the need for a professional development program tailored to address teachers' content knowledge gaps. A longer, continuous, and comprehensive professional development program is suggested as more effective than short workshops in addressing these challenges. Encouraging mandatory workshop attendance and promoting networking groups among technical schools via social media can help teachers share experiences and guidance for teaching challenging subjects. Teachers should also be motivated to pursue further education to acquire new knowledge and skills.

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# Stokvels' Ability to Reduce Household Poverty: Discussions with Rural Women from Jabulani Agri-Village in Mkhondo Local Municipality in South Africa

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**Abstract:** The brunt of poverty is mostly felt by women, and it is women who need to come up with measures to sustain their families financially. In most developing countries most women come together to form informal financial savings schemes called "stokvels" in South Africa and referred to as "rotating savings schemes" elsewhere. In stokvels women make periodic collective savings and disburse the savings once to a member in a period of a year in a lump sum. The money is then used to augment an income, start a business, buy food, pay for children's education and so forth. The aim of this study is to examine the ability of stokvels in reducing household poverty among women with specific reference to Jabulani Agri-Village in the Mkhondo Municipality of Mpumalanga Province, South Africa. The study was informed by a literature review followed by field research in which a semi-structured interview schedule was conducted with forty-eight (48) members from four (4) stokvel groups through focus groups. Data was then summarized to capture emerging themes as well as opinions, attitudes and perceptions. The results of the study indicate that stokvels encourage savings behaviours amongst women especially those who are not candidates for formal financial lending institutions. Women are able to buy food and pay for the schooling of their children. Being members of stokvels gives women a good esteem because they are able to budget for things they wouldn't be able to purchase on their own. Stokvels enables members to act as a social support system in times of need other than financially.

**Keywords:** Stokvel, Financial institutions, Access to credit, Social support, Household poverty

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## 1. Introduction

The notion of rotating savings schemes was academically mentioned by Shirley Ardener in 1964 which led to the interest which is still rife today. An argument by Stoffle, Stoffle, Minnis and Van Vlack (2014) is that rotating savings schemes was brought to the Caribbeans by slaves from West Africa and controlled mainly by women since men's movement was strictly controlled during slavery. The rotating savings schemes played a social and political role in the transportation of information from one plantation to another, a role done mainly by women. Today, rotating saving's schemes play a role in the financial sector, especially in developing countries (Gugerty, 2005). Rural communities, especially women, are unable to access formal financial institutions due to factors such as unemployment and the inability of the rural poor to provide collateral when needed by formal financial institutions. These difficulties are what fuels the informal economy to flourish according to Anigbogu & Okoli (2018).

The ramifications of the legacy of apartheid are said to be still felt by South Africa despite the numerous poverty interpositions the country has put in place to eradicate poverty (Mattes, 2012). The country is still regarded as eminently unequal because of the gap between the haves and the have-nots (World Bank, 2018). Unemployment rates are said to be exorbitantly high making it difficult for the poor to meet their basic needs (Matuku & Kaseke, 2014). South Africa's transformation agenda as encompassed in the 2030 National Development Plan aims at eliminating poverty by raising employment levels. Addressing the ramifications of poverty proves to be difficult due to low economic growth of the country caused by amongst others low savings and poor skills profile.

Poor households feel the effects of food price increases much more severely than more affluent households as they pay more for a basic food basket than their urban counterparts. Rural areas, unlike their urban counterparts, do not have the economic base that urban areas have. Low densities

and their remoteness make it more difficult and costly to maintain and service them (NDP, 2030). In order to eradicate poverty, especially at household level, women should be involved in the economy. Compared to other racial classes, black women are argued to be the face of poverty due to lack of access to resources (Kehler, 2001). Poverty and lack of access to resources such as financial assistance led women to taking the initiative to overcome their impoverished circumstances by forming their own financial support in a form of stokvels. Stokvels are said to play a significant role in assisting those who are not candidates for formal financial institutions to access financial assistance in a form of loans whilst assisting them to save. These informal savings clubs are said to contribute to GDP of the country due to their large scale of availability (African Response Research, 2012; Kok & Malefane, 2018; Bophela & Khumalo, 2019).

## 2. Research Methodology

This study examines the ability of stokvels in reducing household poverty among women with specific reference to Jabulani Agri-Village in the Mkhondo Municipality of Mpumalanga Province, South Africa. The study is qualitative in nature as it is based on the review of literature and documentary review of secondary sources such as scientific journal articles and academic books. Qualitative research methods answer the why's and how's of human behavior, opinion, and experience (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2005; de Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport, 1998). The study was exploratory in nature as it focuses on providing information on the ability of stokvels to reduce household poverty. A purposive sampling method using nonprobability sampling technique was utilised to choose four (4) stokvels with forty-eight (48) members for the study. These were purposely chosen based on their location in the different villages within the Jabulani Agri-Village so they represent the views and ideas of women in their different settings. Information was gathered through focus groups using an unstructured interview schedule. Focus groups are defined as interviews with a small group of people. Interviews are not rigid but allow the free flow of information from group members. Researchers deduct data from group members in a social context (Patton, 2002). These groups allow researchers to verify given information by balancing it with what other group members are saying on a particular topic (Zikmund, 2003). The thematic content analysis

was used to identify and analyse emerging themes. These were organised and interpreted to establish meaning.

## 3. Study Area

The area under study is located in the Mkhondo Local Municipality approximately 34km from Amsterdam. It lies 12km adjacent to the N2 national road from Piet Retief to Ermelo. The community has challenges with public transport to interconnect to other settlements as it is hidden within the Mondi forests. The community relies on Mondi for seasonal employment, only a few community members have stable jobs. There is solar electricity, and running water and families utilise pit toilets. There are no health facilities nearby and communities have to travel 34 km to Amsterdam or Piet Retief town which is 36km to access health facilities. Most families have livestock such as cattle, pigs and chickens for subsistence farming (RSA, 2009).

## 4. Theory

The Social Network Theory was befitting for this study as it is based on the formation of social networks to achieve a particular goal. The theory also emphasises the sharing of knowledge and resources by individuals in a group. Social networks provide a safety net in terms of the provision of business ideas or ventures (Adrich & Dubini, 1991). Entrepreneur ideas are said to have a better chance of succeeding if backed up by group of people with a mutual goal, since they assist each other in carrying operating costs (Adamoniene & Astromskiene, 2010; Leyden, Link & Seigel; 2014; Ganjeh, Khani & Tabriz, 2020). Stokvels are not only about entrepreneurship but also social in nature as they involve women supporting each other during difficult and happy times. The theory will assist in investigating how informal financial networks such as rotating savings schemes assist women in accessing finance, eradicating poverty at household level and their contributions to the Gross Domestic Product of South Africa.

## 5. Review of Literature

### 5.1 History of Rotating Savings Schemes in South Africa

According to Lukhele (1990), Irving (2005), Naong (2009) and Nyandoro (2018), stokvels as they are known today originated in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century

from English Settlers in the Eastern Cape of South Africa. Apparently the term was used when the Settlers auctioned their cattle during social gatherings which included black and white farmers and these would be called 'stock fairs'. It is argued black people socialized and discussed burial issues, hence them establishing burial stokvels to ensure support during bereavement. According to Irving (2005) and Nyandoro (2018), due to the fact that migration to big cities such as Johannesburg and Kimberly was driven by mining, there were high fatalities hence the viability of stokvels to assist with burial needs. When women moved to cities around the 1930s to join their husbands, they ran with the idea of stokvels (Lukhele, 1990) because even though they had moved to the cities, they were still responsible for taking care of their households. According to Verhoef (2001) women were not a viable option as wage labourers and thus had to make means to augment whatever income they had.

The only known organization that governs stokvels in South Africa is the National Stokvel Association of South Africa (NASASA), established in 1988 by Andrew Lukhele (Lukhele, 2018). This was to quell the quest to illegalise stokvels as they were regarded as illegal by the Banks Act 94 of 1990 because stokvels do not have banking licence as it is the requirement for all financial institutions. NASASA mandates that stokvels do not need to officially register in order to be operational (Kartal, 2019). Delving into the nature of stokvels and the fact that they are mostly operated in rural areas where there is shortage of ICT and the level of education of most stokvel members, the probability of all stokvels registering with NASASA might be extremely low.

## 5.2 Stokvels Defined

Stokvels refers to "an informal groups savings scheme in which members voluntarily agree to contribute a fixed amount to a common pool on a regular basis" (Matuku & Kaseke, 2014). They are formed mostly by black women than men emanating from the dire need to supplement their income (Mashigo & Schoeman, 2012; Ngcobo & Chisasa, 2018; Nyandoro, 2018; Bophela & Khumalo, 2019). The number of individuals in a particular stokvel can range from between twelve to 100 depending on the type of stokvel. Burial stokvels generally have the highest number of memberships as compared to other types of stokvels (Ngcobo, 2021). The types

of stokvels, range from burial, savings, investment and high budget, multi-function, borrowing, social clubs and grocery (Mashigo & Schoeman, 2012; Matuku & Kaseke, 2014; Bophela & Khumalo, 2019).

What keeps the group together is loyalty and social norms and values (Moliea, 2000; Jones, Sakyi-Dawson, Harford, Sey, 2000; Verhoef, 2001; Mashigo & Schoeman, 2012; Dlamini & Mpanza, 2020), most of the time it will be women from the same area or village or kinship. Nobody wants to be ostracized as such group members conform to the unwritten norms and values of the group they belong to. The pressure of knowing that there won't be any support in case of emergency is what keeps members of a stokvel committed. Membership to a stokvel is voluntary with identical contributions which are equally distributed. Stokvels encourage saving culture for women and act as a safety net in difficult times (Neves & du Toit, 2012). The general cycle of a stokvel is usually 12 months usually with 12 members, a Chairperson Secretary and a treasurer (Stoffle *et al.*, 2014). In most of the stokvels, a treasurer is not important as payments are made to a particular member monthly when stokvel members meet. Stokvels either disband or continue once all members had their share of coffers (Gugerty, 2005).

During meetings, some stokvels allow member who is to receive money to sell stuff like sweets, beer, cigarettes, cool drinks, clothing and fat cakes to augment whatever lump sum they will be getting (Verhoef, 2001).

## 5.3 Women's Access to the Formal and Informal Finance Sector

South African micro-credit is said to have begun around the 1980's and grew considerable during the period 1995 – 2000. It was legalized by the end of 1992 by an exemption to the Usury Act and the Micro Finance Regulatory Council (Paradigm Shift, 2010). The National Credit Act (NCA) replaced the Usury Act in 2007. The MFRC was replaced by the National Credit Regulator (NCR) which regulates interest rates on loans and discourages reckless lending by credit providers (National Credit Act, 2006).

Black rural women struggle to access finance from the microfinance sector due to poverty and unemployment (Baumann, 2001; Mashigo & Schoeman, 2012; Niyonsaba, Adenikinju & Ntoliti, 2022). Perused literature indicates that poor households



have low savings compounded by high banking fees and low literacy levels (Nugundu & Lombard, 2012; Kartal, 2019; Ngcobo, 2021). Partaking in stokvels is said to have a liberating impact on women since they are able to learn how to save, increasing their economic power, especially for those involved in businesses since they are able to start small business to augment their incomes for those who have some form of an income, whilst bringing total emancipation and economic independence for those who do not have any form of income. It is through stokvels that women are able to increase their asset base, pay school fees and feed their families (Sibomana & Shukla, 2016; Karlan, Savonitto, Thuysbaert & Udry, 2017).

Stokvels serve the sector of society that is not served by traditional banking and non-banking financial institutions (Gugerty, 2005; African Response, 2012; Landman & Mthombeni, 2021). It is argued that billions of rands are channeled through stokvels hence banks such as Standard Bank and First National Banks are now on board to help stokvels formalise their savings (Bophela & Khumalo, 2019) this is because stokvels outperforms most financial institutions hence the interest of financial institutions in tapping into stokvels.

#### **5.4 The Impact of Stokvels on Household Poverty**

In order to assess the impact on stokvels on household poverty, access to credit, stokvels' ability to combat poverty, ability to sustain formal business and create jobs, the creation of social capital and moral support is outlined here under.

##### **5.4.1 Provide Access to Credit**

The low literacy levels compounded by poverty and lack of financial literacy for women act as a hindrance for them to access formal financial institutions such as banks (Mashigo & Schoeman, 2012; Reboul, Guérin & Nordman, 2021). Women gain access to credit through loan sharks who charge higher interest rate than formal financial institutions. They are said to be the preferred solution since it is not a requirement to have collateral in order to access financial assistance (Allen, Otchere & Senbet, 2011; Storchi, 2018; Kartal, 2019; Pandey, Bandyopadhyay & Guiette, 2019; Prijadi, Wulandari, Desiana, Pinagara & Novita, 2020). It is postulated that women struggle to have access to credit from formal institutions such as banks (Cohen, Bhatt &

Horn, 2000; Rogerson, 2000; Moliea, 2007; Nugundu & Lombard, 2012; Mashigo & Schoeman, 2012; Anigbogu & Okoli, 2018) and as such, according to Niyonsaba *et al.* (2022) start savings clubs and use the money to open or expand their trade. They join rotating savings schemes to augment their incomes and be able to buy household goods and attend to the health care and education of their children. Most lending institutions require collateral (Mashigo & Schoeman, 2012) which women seldom have due to lack of employment and poverty. Stokvels create easy access to credit (Moliea, 2007; Nyandoro, 2018) and the access to credit reduces household poverty and hunger especially for black women since they are in the majority in rotating savings schemes.

##### **5.4.2 Vehicle to Combating Poverty**

Poverty and inequality especially in developing countries such as South Africa affects more women than men. Women as caregivers are most of the time left with the responsibility of taking care of household needs and children (Nyandoro, 2018). Stokvels then become the means by which women are able to fend for themselves and their families. The onus was then on women who moved to cities to create a financial base for themselves and their families (Matuku & Kaseke, 2014). By starting informal savings groups women were then able to save and provide for their households by using the savings for food, clothing, pay for their children's schooling, etc. (Moliea, 2007; Matuku & Kaseke, 2014; Nyandoro, 2018; Bophela & Khumalo, 2019; Landman & Mthombeni, 2021). The burial stokvels are the most common stokvels that almost all households are part of, so it is not unusual for households to join more than one stokvel to augment the various needs that each family would have. By joining more stokvels women are able to eradicate hunger and fight poverty at household level (Mashigo & Schoeman, 2012; Storchi, 2018).

##### **5.4.3 Sustenance of Existing Formal Businesses and Creation of Jobs**

Stokvels support big businesses because they buy food, clothing and household appliances from them (Lappeman, Chigada & Pillay, 2019). South Africa is said to see a boom in commercial businesses as stokvels buy commodities around October until January, this is besides the usual clientele that spend money on gifts, decorations, weddings, parties, etc. (Barrow & McGranahan, 2000; Lam, Vandenbosch, Hulland & Pearce, 2001; RSA, 2019; Ruddick, 2015; Lappeman, *et al.*, 2019). Stokvels members are able



to make savings on the stock price of the commodities they purchase because they are able to buy in bulk and get discount from businesses, which would be a difficult if they were to buy individually as a household (Lukhele, 1990; Irving, 2005; Tshandu, 2016; Storchi, 2018; Ngcobo, 2021).

#### **5.4.4 Creation of Social Capital, Moral Support, and Mutual Assistance**

Stokvels are not heavily legislated unlike formal banking systems and thus create easy access to credit for those who cannot be served by formal financial sectors (Vonderlack & Schreiner, 2002; Moliea, 2007; Matuku & Kaseke, 2014; Landman & Mthombeni, 2021; Ngcobo & Chisasa, 2018; Ngcobo, 2021). Interestingly, stokvels are built on simple trust amongst stokvel members. Societal norms are what holds rotating schemes together and that results on an extremely low default rate. The fear of societal ostracization and being banned from participating in other stokvels is what compels members to adhere to the informal rules of rotating savings schemes (Moliea, 2007; Kartal, 2019; Landman & Mthombeni, 2021). According to Buijs (1998) putting new members at the end of the rotation cycle is another manner in which stokvels guard against defaults. To increase the benefits of being in a stokvel, parties are held at each other's houses in a rotational basis giving each member a chance to augment the savings they will receive. In most stokvels, member are allowed to sell sweets, alcohol, food and so forth to make more money on the day it is their turn to receive the savings. There are also social roles that stokvels serve besides the financial benefits such as social support during death, weddings and sickness. Members normally rally around each other in times of happiness and calamities (Verhoef, 2001; Moliea, 2007; Aibgbogu & Okoli, 2018).

## **6. Jabulani Rotating Savings Scheme**

The concept of stokvels at Jabulani Agri-Village was started in 2013 by the then Department of Rural Development and Land Reform which is now the Department of Agriculture Land Reform and Rural Development with the help of the Nelson Mandela's Children Fund who were responsible for the implementation of the programme. The purpose of the stokvels was to improve business activities of rural women since they are not a viable group for the formal financial sector. Stokvels within Jabulani Agri-Village utilises financial resources already

existing within the community thus strengthening their asset base and making an improvement on their economic security. It also encouraged women to get involved in productive enterprises activities (RSA, 2009).

Jabulani stokvels are different in that there is formal training in their establishment. The training has the group formation phase where they get trained on how to form savings and credit clubs; financial phase where they get introduced to basic financial concepts; enterprise development where members get trained on the essentials of starting and running an enterprise; and institutionalization, where long-term goals are established for the groups to create convergence with the formal sector (RSA, 2009).

In these stokvels women form groups of twelve (12) and contribute R50 each month to the kitty which then makes it R600 a month. Every member of the same group then borrows an equal amount of the money at 10% interest, i.e. R50 is borrowed plus R5 interest equaling R55 to be returned to the kitty at the end of the month by each member. The total will be R660 and the process is followed until the end of the year.

Besides the payouts from stokvels, women are also encouraged to start their own small businesses so that they are able to return the interest on the money borrowed. They are encouraged to sell stuff like sweets, cigarettes, cool drinks, snacks, fat cakes etc. in their households whilst others start vegetable gardens and sell their vegetables to the community. Group members are encouraged to only buy necessities from one another. Those that are doing vegetable gardening are encouraged to diversify their crops to make it easy for stokvel members to buy from them and eliminate competition amongst themselves. This endeavour discourages them from borrowing money from informal money lenders at exorbitant interest rates. The women do not only meet for financial issues but also form support groups and discuss issues such as domestic violence, child care, funerals as well as other things in their communities that necessitates their involvement (RSA, 2009).

## **7. Results and Discussion**

### **7.1 Demographic Information**

Most (80%) of the members of the Jabulani Rotating Savings Scheme are above the age of fifty with 20%

between the ages 30-50. Most of these women were not employed except for a few who normally get contract jobs with Mondi Forest. The age difference does not seem to bother the savings scheme members as iterated by one member, *"It helps to have the younger ones in the group because they are faster in writing and thus we do not spend more time on the group but focus on our households and our businesses"*. The diversity amongst the members benefits all group members. According to perused literature, stokvels assist in the creation of social capital, moral support, and mutual assistance. The majority of women within the Jabulani Agri-village do not have stable jobs and are thus not served by formal financial institutions. The reason for joining savings clubs is supported by literature as it is said that women join rotating savings schemes to augment their incomes and be able to buy household goods and attend to the health care and education of their children (Mashigo & Schoeman, 2012).

## 7.2 Access to Credit

Rotating Savings Schemes do offer access to credit for members who would not under normal circumstances be assisted by formal financial institutions. Literature posits that women gain access to credit through loan sharks who charge higher interest rate than formal financial institutions. They are said to be the preferred solution since it is not a requirement to have collateral in order to access financial assistance (Allen *et al.*, 2011; Storchi, 2018; Kartal, 2019; Pandey *et al.*, 2019; Prijadi *et al.*, 2020). This has been proven true by the responses from some of the members. *"It is impossible to borrow money from banks my child if you are unemployed, I am able to borrow money from the stokvel and buy small things in the house"*. Another member said, *"I haven't been to school but I am now able to know how much we are making as a group"*. The financial security acquired from being members of the group has led to the women cut ties with borrowing money from informal money lenders. *"I do not go to the loan shark anymore, I think he is running out of business"*, said one member with a smile.

## 7.3 Impact on Poverty Alleviation

A majority of the members of the Jabulani Rotating Savings Club (80%) are way past their child-bearing age, however they all look after their grandchildren. *"We rely on social grants for our children and grandchildren and most of the time that is not enough. I am*

*able to supplement the grant money with the money I make from selling vegetables."*

Members of the savings club support one another in terms of their small businesses by buying from each other. All of them have vegetable gardens and have diversified their crops to meet the demands of the group and the community, and also that they be able to buy different things from each member. That ensures that every group member has an opportunity to be supported with their small business. According to the Social Network Theory, entrepreneurship is said to succeed if backed-up by people with the same goal and that is proved to be the case with Jabulani women. The fact that they are able to start small businesses, and these thrive is because of the support from other group members. Those who have children that can travel to Piet Retief town are able to buy and sell sweets, cigarettes and fat cakes. *"The fact that it is my money makes me proud and finally I am able to save"*. According to Sibomana & Shukla (2016), partaking in stokvels have a liberating impact on women since they are able to learn how to save, increasing their economic power. It is through stokvels that women are able to increase their asset base, pay school fees and feed their families (Karlan, Savonitto, Thuysbaert & Udry, 2017) as is the case with the Jabulani Agri-Village savings groups.

## 7.4 Creation of Social Capital, Moral Support, and Mutual Assistance

According to Stoffle *et al.* (2014), stokvels assist in uniting women socially. The Jabulani savings club members assist each other in times of emergencies such as funerals and illness. In one of the four groups, members indicated that they are now able to visit each other and that has united their communities because previously they did not even enter each other's compound, they are also able to discuss social issues like HIV, Childcare and domestic violence.

*"During apartheid, we were pitted against one another, feud was carried from one generation to another, but now we are able to talk and support each other"*. According to Verhoef (2001), Moliea (2007) and Aibgbogu & Okoli (2018), stokvels also play a social role where women are able to support each other in times of need. The Social Network theory emphasizes the sharing of ideas by individuals in a group and this is evident in the support women give each

other in the group, not only financial but with every-day needs.

## 8. Conclusion and Recommendations

The aim of this study was to examine the ability of stokvels to reduce household poverty among women. A sample size of forty-eight women from four out of ten stokvels was selected for the study. The focus group interviews confirm information from perused literature and analysed documents in that stokvels do indeed assist in the reduction of poverty at household level because the findings of the study confirm that women are able to access credit from each other. The women from Jabulani Agri-Village were also able to start small businesses and able to take care of their households financially. The result of this study therefore calls for the development of policies and targeted financial products that empower women financially to propel women towards financial independence. In order to acknowledge the role of women in the informal economy, Government and civil society should promote a savings culture especially in rural areas by empowering women through financial inclusion.

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# Reviewing the Application of Budgeting Techniques in Budgeting: A Case of the City of Tshwane Municipality

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**Abstract:** This study examined how municipal employees interpret budget-related behaviour to determine if established budgeting techniques were used for associated modern and geriatric programs, and if so, if these techniques were used to support the strategic plan's efforts. Several authorities participated in semi-structured interviews, and questionnaires were distributed to all municipal officials in charge of budgeting for their respective municipal divisions. The analysis of the collected data from respondents was descriptive. This study uncovered a discrepancy between how budget authorities implement modern budgeting strategies for new initiatives and how they utilize traditional budgeting techniques for ongoing programs. Emergent and systems theory were used to evaluate interpretation-based applications. One of the recommendations resulting from the descriptive study's conclusions is that officials receive improved ongoing training on how to properly apply and integrate the budgeting techniques currently in use.

**Keywords:** Application, Budgeting techniques, Budgeting, Municipality, Programmes

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## 1. Introduction

Budgeting is utilized for a variety of purposes, including financial planning of resource distribution, motivating officials, and coordinating operations (Covaleski, Evans, Luft & Shields, 2003; De Azavero, Cardoso, Da Cunha & Wempler, 2022). Therefore, the primary purpose of budgeting is to equip management with the information necessary to maximize the organization's financial resources and maintain cost control in accordance with the Medium-Term Revenue Expenditure Framework (MTREF) (Mitchell, Larson, Henley, Spranger & Myser, 2022). As a consequence of the budgeting techniques employed, municipal cost estimates should be accurate and reliable. However, if budgeting techniques are not implemented equitably, the budget estimates will almost undoubtedly contain erroneous assumptions about the delivery of programs (Maluleke, 2020). In addition, incorrect budgeting techniques can therefore undermine municipal programs and influence performance evaluation (Lulaj, Zarin & Rahman, 2022). As such, implementation of the budgeting techniques will require the knowledge and experience of municipal officials. Municipal authorities must understand the prescribed budgeting techniques and how to estimate costs for specific programs in order

to budget appropriately (Garcia-Unanue, Felipe, Gallardo, Majano & Perez-Lopez, 2021). In turn, this can be an excellent strategy for implementing budget estimates, enhancing service estimates, and maintaining sound financial health by virtually eliminating wasteful expenditure. Understanding the numerous components and processes of municipal budget practices could aid in determining this through the lens of emergent and system theory for application prediction. In addition, the use of budgeting tools without assessing program and sustainability, including periodic feasibility, may have an impact on the financial stability of budgets (Murray-Svidroová, Benzoni-Balá, Klimovsk & Kaáková, 2022).

Activity-based budgeting (ABB), zero-based budgeting (ZBB), line-item budgeting (LIB), and incremental budgeting, to name a few, were developed to provide a basis for allocating and controlling costs specified in the budget and linked in program-based budgeting (Mitchel *et al.*, 2021). These methods are used in conjunction with managerial accounting methods such as activity-based costing (ABC) for monitoring actual costs, standard costing (SC) for yearly cost variance, and cost volume and profit (CVP) analysis for cost reviews and adjustments of various geriatric and modern programs.

Consequently, employing these techniques when applicable provides a firm basis for operational and financial control. According to Dominiak and Louderback (1997), these techniques provide early indications that estimates are less desirable than intended achievement. Consequently, the MTREF's conformance is contingent on how budgeting techniques are implemented.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Classification and Types of Budgeting Techniques as Costing Methods

Depending on the type of budgeting technique being utilized for instance: line-item, programme-based, incremental, zero-based or activity-based budgets, each has unique qualities that must be emphasized. The following lists various budgeting systems and methods.

#### 2.1.1 Incremental Budgeting

The classic approach of incremental budgeting involves increasing costs by making baseline projections to account for inflationary changes (Rahim, Wendling & Pedastsaar, 2021). By modifying marginal changes on input estimates for MTREF purposes, Francesco and Barroso (2015) note that this type of budgeting lacks programme intervention informed by geriatric budget. As this strategy fosters the accumulation of cost estimates, budget year levels are maintained, and no efforts are made to cut costs (Regan & Brown, 2021). Although many municipal practices have been repealed, there are still technical difficulties in the budgeting system for geriatric programs in the municipal setting (Erasmus, 2003; Siyanbola, 2013).

#### 2.1.2 Line-Item Budgeting (LIB)

The classic approach of budgeting involves classifying tasks in order to regulate budgetary allocations in a logical sequence. According to Brandt (1982) and Rivenbark (2004), allocations are automated into computer systems with an exaggerated track of municipal spending, giving the impression that budget procedures are followed on inputs. As a result, there is no cost alignment for priorities to evaluate program performance. However, programs can now be repurposed within government accounting systems thanks to industrial revolution (IR) technology (National Treasury, 2023). As such, emerging nations adopt this strategy frequently (Surianti & Dalimunthe, 2015).

#### 2.1.3 Zero-Based Budgeting (ZBB)

ZBB often known as priority-based budgeting, is a common method for planning programs from scratch for the upcoming year (Kadenge, 2021; Mitchell, 2022). According to Mitchell *et al.* (2022), this method incurs expenditures for each activity in the budget center from zero-base connecting activity-based budgeting (ABB) for inputs and carries over the suggested activities for subsequent budget outputs. After that, estimations are evaluated and prioritized in light of organizational goals, and then funds are allotted based on that priority (International Monetary Fund (IMF), 2023). Instead of concentrating on marginal budgetary changes, this technique was developed to lessen the complexities of incremental budgeting (Siyanbola, 2013; National Treasury, 2021). The majority of municipalities employ these methods to get rid of unethical budget compiler practices (Erasmus, 2003).

#### 2.1.4 Programme-Based Budgeting (PBB)

PBB separates programs into segments that focus on outputs, then creates data regarding consumption before allocating estimates based on priorities and results as well as accomplishing the municipality's goal (Avwokeni, 2016; Mauro, Cinquin & Grossi, 2017). This method, which was developed to address flaws in line-item budgeting, is effective since it pinpoints the reasonable cost between program drivers and measures (Surianti & Dalimunthe, 2015). As municipalities are currently under pressure to evaluate their programs (Miller, Hildreth & Rabin, 2018) to the greatest extent possible in order to implement a cost-effective method for program performance and coordinate with the legislature (Park, 2019), academics see this technique as a most prominent option. Each program is created to accomplish its goals through budget allocation, and the total funds available are divided among the programs rather than dividing expenses among departments in an effort to reduce wasteful spending (Avwokeni, 2016; De Azavero & De Aquino, 2022).

#### 2.1.5 Activity-Based Budgeting (ABB)

Instead of focusing on the initial cost, this technique identifies the measure that drives the cost (Siyanbola, 2013). Activity-based budgeting (ABB) is similar to Activity-based costing (ABC), which was created to trace program input by identifying the resources consumed by particular activities along with the costs incurred to produce that output (Stevenson & Cabell, 2002; Yerelli, 2009). Many municipalities are assiduously working to implement

this type of budgeting technique to improve their budget estimates on inputs. The proposed performance-based program approach to budgeting uses ABB as a useful tool for reducing output costs. The budget compilers can examine ongoing and important activities using this method and, if necessary, reprioritize money to make sure that these priorities can be supported within the actual baseline to enhance the primary services (National Treasury, 2022). However, there are several factors that affect how these strategies are used. These factors are described below.

## 2.2 Factors Affecting the Municipal Budgeting Process

A municipality's ability to successfully implement the budgeting process depends on a variety of elements (Curristine, Lonti & Joumard, 2007). Those mentioned are relevant to the study's focus on factors that might affect the planned use of budgeting techniques.

First, infamous political influence has been thought to have an impact on budgeting and how allotted financial resources are used to offer vital services. Jianxun, Arkorful and Shuliang (2021), concur that political intervention and coercive pressures can affect how decisions are made, particularly when allocating financial resources. As a result, at the beginning stages of budgeting, municipal officials may be inclined to improve budget estimates as well as participate to contribute to the municipal strategic planning (Liyang & Ismail, 2023). In that slope, party politicians can take the opportunity to manipulate municipal budgets in this way (Lozano-Reina & Sanchez-Marn, 2020; Aranda, Arellano & Davila, 2023) while also giving the impression that the use of budgeting techniques is insufficient for programs in terms of good budgeting governance (Haliah, 2016).

Second, the absence of public involvement results in a wider diffusion of the budgeting process, which has an impact on resource allocation (Dajer, 2023). As a result, lack of involvement weights the program priorities to which budgeting approaches should be used. Additionally, the public's involvement in the budget process has decreased as a result of the public's lack of trust in the government (Pereira & Figueira, 2022), creating a budgetary slack that puts pressure on budget officials to prepare input allocation while also affecting the use of budgeting techniques (Haliah,

2016; Shybalkina, 2021). In order to ensure participation as a social obligation, it is strategically important to involve the public through a variety of networks (Johnson, Jones & Reitano, 2021).

Thirdly, incomplete projections that were carried over during the budget cycle without finishing the prior stage because of time restrictions or a lack of program data (De Azavero *et al.*, 2022). According to De Aquino and Batley (2021), both industrialized and emerging economies face these difficulties when they impose erroneous projections on their implementation plans. The under-estimation of programs caused by this practice compromises the integrity of municipal financial management of resources (Aranda *et al.*, 2023) and may force the adoption of questionable baseline estimates from earlier years.

Fourth, the budgeting is impacted by a lack of transparency and funding of discretionary programs. According to Jiménez & Albalate (2018), the allocation of resources is distorted by the absence of transparency in municipal spending and the programs that are accounted for. In addition, discretionary estimates are then added to the budgeting process as a result, which can drive up the overall budget cost and compromise fiscal responsibility and sustainability (Mou & Lazano Man Hing, 2021; Van der Waladt, 2016). Despite the fact that legislation places a strong emphasis on transparency to support the delivery of programs (Hanabe, Taylor & Raga, 2018), implementation remains difficult, which presents room for dishonesty in the application of appropriate budgeting techniques and insufficient use of financial resources (Nate, Stavytssky & Kharlamova, 2023). However, Shybalkina (2021) notes that accountability is upheld through transparency, and expanding the use of discretionary expenditures is consistent with municipal budgeting policies.

Lastly, cadre deployment and open critical strategic positions. Maluleke (2023) notes that the budgeting process in municipalities is impacted by vacant important positions at the national and provincial levels that are in charge of allocating funding to local government. Additionally, the political interest of governing parties in key strategic positions like Chief Financial Officer and Municipal Manager, to name a few, has an impact on how well municipalities are run in terms of the expertise, soft skills, and knowledge of municipal financial operations

of the appointee (Auditor General, 2019; Moji, Nhede & Masiya, 2022; Matlala, 2018). Therefore, the entire municipal budgeting process – including the employment of budgeting procedures to distribute those funds – is impacted if improper financing is distributed to municipalities or assigned to the budget office (Glasser & Wright, 2020; Mkhonza & Letsoalo-Fuze, 2017).

### 2.3 The Role Budgeting Techniques Plays In Budgeting

According to De Azevedo *et al.* (2022), budgeting is a complex and difficult procedure that involves multiple stages and requires a variety of budget data from various sources. Complexity increases if local government financial management remains a top priority in order to offset spending restrictions (Surianti & Dalimunthe, 2015). Municipal departments are therefore required to generate program budget estimates in order to maintain and balance their development plans (Park, 2019). Due to the involvement of multiple stakeholders who determine budget distribution strategies, the estimation procedure may be challenging. Nonetheless, it is essential to have accurate budget projections that can be presented to management for review in order to confirm accuracy and compliance with legal requirements.

Because decisions are based on whether a program was accurately costed before implementation (Mkhize, Fouché & Van der Walt, 2021) before other factors that halt the process are instrumented, knowledge and expertise on how to apply these techniques used to estimate inputs are crucial. A study by Algharabali (2019) contends that even when estimations are accurate, certain alterations are enforced early in the budgeting process, which might deviate and have a detrimental impact on the rational execution of that program. The application is addressed by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2017) since it offers comparative and transparent cost information on the inputs used to estimate a program. According to Abdullah (2008), the budgeting technique is considered as a systematic method for calculating and allocating budgetary estimates for programs based on the behaviour classification of those programs. National Treasury (2021) states that budgeting technique is a crucial instrument for gathering data that may be utilized for reporting on the accuracy of the estimations. As a result,

budgeting techniques offer a thorough financial analysis of each cost that should be in line with the program.

Previous research has indicated that some municipal programmes are irrelatively priced as a result of incomplete budget estimates (Zweni, 2017; Musyoka, 2017). Budgetary allocation on programmes in most municipalities is still an emerging practice (Mitchel *et al.*, 2021). This may be a result of the way budgeting techniques are applied which can affect the programmes priorities (National Treasury, 2021). However, existing research has not identified proposed solution on assumption to improve the municipal system on application of budgeting techniques (Dokulil, Popesko & Kadalova, 2022). Nonetheless, the presence of applying available budgeting techniques will ensure that the existence of primitive programmes is traced, re-assessed for risk and relevance to ensure that the municipality's performance results in the Auditor General report in terms of planning and executing budget estimates in budget management is relative (National Treasury, 2021; Manyaka & Sebola, 2015; Zweni, Yan & Uys, 2022).

Researchers indicate that the application of a budgeting technique in a municipality is not restricted to dividing and subdividing programs and redistributing estimates (Algharabali, 2019; Park, 2019; Motubatse, Ngwakwe & Sebola, 2017). In addition, it functions as a management tool for policy adherence and measurement when comparing costs to determine if it is feasible to provide the service in accordance with statutory requirements. Zweni *et al.* (2022) concur that innovative approaches that establish a budgetary criterion for future expansion of services and performance within the law are required to assess the justification of geriatric and contemporary programs.

### 3. Research Problem

The municipality is faced with a challenge of application between traditional budgeting techniques for existing programs and modern budgeting techniques. As such, the municipality must bridge the gap between the way budget officials actually apply modern budgeting techniques (such as activity-based and zero-based budgeting) for new programs and traditional budgeting methods (such as incremental and line-item budgeting) for already-existing programs.



## 4. Research Objective

The research objective is to examine if recognized budgeting approaches were being employed and, if so, whether such strategies were being applied to linked geriatric and modern programs.

## 5. Potential Theories

### 5.1 Systems Theory

Systems theory is defined as a set of interrelated components that exchanges related inputs and outputs rather than isolation towards maintaining a functional environment (Wilkinson, 2011). By comprehending the framework and techniques to identify the interlink of numerous elements associated in the phenomena, systems theory may be used to adopt the comprehensive approach required to close gaps in an organization (Shuttleworth, 2009; Kaiser & Smallwood, 2014). According to Nowak (2004), this theory in a municipality focuses on offering prospective insights into the nature of budgeting and a greater understanding of municipal practices in the formulation, justification, and orientation of financial data; in this case, the use of budgeting techniques and practice. As a result, Daniela, Marius, Andreea-Ramona and Oana-Alina (2013) provide evidence to support the necessity of modifying a system's programs in order to bring its application value up to date with current demands and expectations. This involves the consistency of the approaches' interconnectedness in geriatric and contemporary programs.

### 5.2 Emergent Theory

Emergent theory examines how different systems respond to various dynamics to understand their causes and provide remedies to manage and minimise damages (McEntire, 2005). Budgeting is one

type of a method in which financial expectations used to deliver services flow through and alter various organizational practices, and emergent theories are helpful in realizing this (Arthur, 2013; Osho & Omotayo, 2018). Emergent theories in budgeting use an understanding of various budget-related practices of programs in the budget system. Practice includes expected application of budgeting techniques in budgeting. According to this theory, specific actions or routines help create an illusion that places boundaries on what is acceptable and given priority (Arthur, 2013). Which programs are viewed as priorities in this situation will determine whether budgeting approaches are used and in what proportion.

## 6. Research Method

### 6.1 Research Design and Approach

The study was carried out in a scenario that came after a quantitative survey to examine how budgeting techniques were applied to programmes. Data from the budget office were gathered utilizing questionnaires. 50 municipal officials who were involved in the municipality's planning and budget estimations made up the target population. To support the essential data for a descriptive analysis of the data, interviews were used. A five-point Likert and dichotomous scale was used for the questions' responses, and 31 individuals gave their answers. The drivers of the variables were measured using multinomial logic regression.

## 7. Data Collection and Analysis

All respondents have formal tertiary education and majority have year's of experience working in the municipality as well as 70% affiliated with a professional body. This means the municipality has budget compliers presumed fit to use budgeting techniques and ethical professional practice. See Table 1, 2 & 3.

**Table 1: Highest Qualification**

Criteria	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
National diploma	2	6.45	2	6.45
Bachelor's degree	26	83.87	28	90.32
Master's degree	3	9.68	31	100.00
<b>Sample Size = 31</b>				



**Table 2: Years of Work Experience**

Criteria	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
1-2 years	6	19.35	6	19.35
3-5 years	20	64.52	26	83.87
6-10 years	4	12.90	30	96.77
11 years or more	1	3.23	31	100.00
Sample Size = 31				

**Table 3: Professional Body**

Criteria	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
IMFO	14	46.67	14	46.67
SAIPA	7	23.33	21	70.00
None	9	30.00	30	100.00
Sample Size = 30				

**Table 4: Being Part of a Line Function**

Criteria	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Yes	29	93.55	29	93.55
No	2	6.45	31	100.00
Sample Size = 31				

**Table 5: Are you Aware of the Range of Budgeting Techniques to be Applied?**

Criteria	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	19	61.29	19	61.29
Agree	12	38.71	31	100.00
Sample Size = 31				

**Table 6: Do You Have Knowledge of the Budgeting Techniques to be Applied?**

Criteria	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	17	54.84	17	54.84
Agree	14	45.16	31	100.00
Sample Size = 31				

93.55% of the respondents oversee the budgeting process from the early stages but only 61.29% strongly agree of being aware of the range of that's available. This could mean that respondents who are aware do not use them in a sense that responsibilities are shared among officials whereby some gather budget data for input then ascending to other officials to continue with data output using budgeting technique. This supports the 54.84% of respondents

who indicated to have to have knowledge to apply the techniques. See Table 4, 5 & 6.

Nearly all respondents (96.77%) "agree" and "strongly agree" to use budgeting techniques to track and record costs and 83.87% also "agreed" and strongly "agree" that programmes are correctly costed. This is a good sign since application ensures budget allocation of financial resources. See Table 7 & 8.

**Table 7: Do You Use Budgeting Techniques to Record and Track the Costs of Programmes?**

Criteria	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	14	45.16	14	45.16
Agree	16	51.61	30	96.77
Strongly Disagree	1	3.23	31	100.00
Sample Size = 31				

**Table 8: Do Budgeting Techniques Ensure That Programmes are Estimated Correctly?**

Criteria	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	6	19.35	6	19.35
Agree	20	64.52	26	83.87
Not Sure	5	16.13	31	100.00
Sample Size = 31				

**Table 9: Are Budget Inputs Believed to be Reliable and Accurate?**

Criteria	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	13	41.94	13	41.94
Agree	18	58.06	31	100.00
Sample Size = 31				

**Table 10: Do the Final Submissions of Budget Estimates Use Budget Estimates?**

Criteria	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	13	41.94	13	41.94
Agree	15	48.39	28	90.32
Disagree	1	3.23	29	93.55
Strongly Disagree	2	6.45	31	100.00
Sample Size = 31				

**Table 11: Is Necessary Assistance on Budgeting Techniques Applied?**

Criteria	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Disagree	6	19.35	6	19.35
Strongly Disagree	25	80.65	31	100.00
Sample Size = 31				

All respondents are positive that budget inputs are reliable and accurate as well the estimates are used in the final budget submissions. This finding may be indicative of the fact that the use of budgeting techniques encourages operational efficiency and accurate costing of programmes to establish reliable based estimates on available financial resources. See Table 9, 10 & 11.

Responding to the question as to which budget techniques are being applied, the majority (51.6%)

were "not sure" while 48.4% of respondents said "No" to incremental budgeting. A logical explaining may be that when cost estimate are incomplete, adjustments are made referring to previous year's budget which technically historic hence those who mentioned "Not sure" are aware that such practice was abolished by National treasury but certain programme increases may be completed through inflationary adjustments. As previously mentioned, that budgeting is complex in public sector. Therefore, if the previous costs are incorrect,

**Table 12: Do Officials Apply Incremental Budget?**

Criteria	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
No	15	48.39	15	48.39
Not Sure	16	51.61	31	100.00
Sample Size = 31				

**Table 13: Do Officials Apply Activity-Based Budget (ABB)?**

Criteria	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Yes	6	19.35	6	19.35
No	3	9.68	9	29.03
Not Sure	22	70.97	31	100.00
Sample Size = 31				

**Table 14: Do Officials Apply Line-Item Budgeting (LIB)?**

Criteria	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
No	31	100.00	31	100.00
Sample Size = 31				

**Table 15: Do Officials Apply Programme-Based Budgets (PBB)?**

Criteria	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Yes	31	100.00	31	100.00
Sample Size = 31				

**Table 16: Do Officials Apply Zero-Based Budget (ZBB)?**

Criteria	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Yes	31	100.00	31	100.00
Sample Size = 31				

the budget estimates are inevitably unreliable. Yet, respondents indicated that budget estimates are reliable. The use of historic practices are some reasons why municipal Acts are amended to accommodate the technical deficiencies in municipal finances. Bhatia (2009) and Scott (2019) contend that with growing activities and complex of municipal government functions on budget estimates, it is becoming difficult to apply budgeting distinctively. See Table 12.

The majority (71%) were also "not sure" whether Activity-based budgeting (ABB) was being applied. However, respondents indicated track and record cost, ABB similarly to ABC is used to trace cost to identify resource consumed by a specific programme.

All respondents also confirmed that they budget from zero according to the principles of Zero-based Budgeting (ZBB) on new programmes. However, new programmes in the current year can use ZBB but the following year it should use ABB and PBB to maintain the budget estimates for anticipated consumption and prioritizing outputs. All respondents indicated "No" to using LIB and "Yes" to using PBB. This means, instead of listing programmes, they are further subdivided into activities to ensure that funds are linked to costs to achieve strategic objectives. This analysis concludes that there is some awareness of specific budgeting techniques existence. however, the intended usage still a major concern and the link between these techniques in budgeting. See Table 13, 14, 15 & 16.

## 8. Conclusion and Recommendations

The techniques and system of municipal budgeting appear to be central. The difficulty, however, lies in its application, which hinders cost estimates and burdens budgeting. Even if they were budgeted and submitted in a timely manner, this causes some implementation allocations to be overlooked based on the priority of the services. As a result, it is suggested that budget simulation from each budgeting technique be performed in-house prior to determining whether the application is adequate, and the estimates are reliable. In addition, the transfer of some programs from traditional to modern methods necessitates the guidance and oversight of qualified and experienced officials to ensure efficacy and efficiency. In addition, the municipality should investigate interlinking and collaborating with other costing techniques, such as transfer pricing (TP), in order to inform decisions regarding resource allocation in their expenditure programs. Budgeting is supported by Zweni *et al.* (2022) and the National Treasury (2020), who state that consolidating programs is essential for improving value for money and controlling costs.

Municipalities should also employ cross-sectional budgeting to incorporate historic program costs with modern application techniques in order to enhance, modify, and advance the programs towards service delivery and cost management. This may aid in the restructuring of programmes to ensure that relevant cost and priority programmes in the budgeting process are adhered to in order to account for budgeting process-affecting variables. To achieve this, continuous training of budget-related activities and programs at the planning stage in terms of budgeting techniques, including application and challenges, identification and approach to financial resources usage, notification, accountability, and contingency of budget-related destruction is required.

Zweli *et al.* (2022) concur that participation in budgeting and financial management training programmes provides enhancements and competence in these disciplines. South African municipalities are in a crisis of mismanagement of funds as a result of various activities, such as the application of budgeting techniques to programs that prioritize service delivery and discourage and dissatisfy budget officials due to politics and subjective norms. The scope of the study was limited to a review of the availability and application of budgeting techniques.

Consequently, the study did not evaluate the effectiveness of the municipality's application of the available budgeting techniques.

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# Challenges Affecting Community Policing as a Form of Co-Production

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**Abstract:** This study examined challenges associated with community policing as a form of co-production. Community policing as a form of co-production was introduced in Lilongwe in 1997, a few years after the change of political system from one party system of government to multiparty in 1994. It was introduced to bridge the gap between police and citizens, improve citizen trust and confidence in the police, improve citizen participation in delivery of public safety and security services and to improve police legitimacy. Under one party system of government, the Malawi Police Force (MPF) was largely unaccountable, not trusted and lacked the capability to effectively detect criminal activities. Despite more than two decades of community policing in Malawi, major academic studies discussing challenges affecting its implementation are scarce. Using the phenomenological and qualitative approach, this study therefore examined challenges associated with community policing as a form of co-production. The study focused on perceptions of the public as well as perceptions of the police in Lilongwe. Results revealed that although community policing was now a major component of crime control in Malawi, it was faced by a myriad of challenges including corruption, human rights abuse and misconduct by both police officers and members of community police forums and neighbourhood watch groups, lack of feedback from the police, lack of joint patrols, volunteerism, assaults and injuries among community police members and neglect of duties by police officers.

**Keywords:** Co-production, Citizen participation, Community policing, Malawi Police Force

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## 1. Introduction

The aim of community policing is to enhance police-community partnership to solve neighborhood safety and security problems (Setu & Tekle, 2017:9). Community policing enables police to become part of the locality and this assists police get a better sense of community's needs and helps residents to develop greater trust in the police (Dominique et al., 2007). In Malawi, community policing was first piloted in Lilongwe district in 1997, three years after the change from one party political system of government to multiparty in 1994 (Malawi Police Service, 2002; Sikwese, 2013; Trone, Miller & Thornton, 2005). Under one party system, the Malawi Police Force (MPF) served dual roles: preventing and responding to crime and maintaining the power of the then ruling Malawi Congress Party (MCP) (Mutharika, 2003). Thus, the police were mainly used as an oppressive tool to suppress political dissent and people's freedom. The police were largely unaccountable and ill-equipped to effectively detect, prevent and control criminal activities. During the one-party era, the MCP Youth

wing had organized itself in such a way that it provided a form of self-policing at the local level during the one-party era (Mutharika, 2003). These factors made the MPF unable to work well in a democracy where the police were required to work with people.

Although community policing as a form of co-producing public safety and security was now a major component of crime control in Malawi, it has been affected by a myriad of challenges. These challenges are inadequately explored and documented in the scientific and academic literature. This study therefore examined challenges associated with community policing as a form of co-production and focused on perceptions of the public as well as perceptions of the police in Lilongwe district in Malawi.

## 2. Relevance of the Study

The growing crime, public disorder and fear of crime across the world, Malawi inclusive, has stimulated citizens to become actively involved in community policing to increase safety and security in their communities (Cordner, 2014). However, there are

many challenges associated with such co-production. While in many countries such as Kenya, South Africa, Nigeria, Australia and Mexico, several academic studies have been conducted on challenges affecting community policing as a form of co-production, in Malawi such studies have not been adequately documented (Newman & Nalla (eds.), 2013; Renauer, Duffe & Scott, 2000:9; Clegg, Hunt & Whetton, 2000:40). This study explored challenges affecting implementation of community policing as a form of co-production in Lilongwe. Findings of the study will contribute to academic discourse on police reform and give a new dimension on how to approach co-production challenges in the delivery of public safety and security in Malawi. The study may also inform security policy changes in Malawi.

### 3. Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research approach, and relied on both primary and secondary sources. Qualitative research approach best suited the study because the study related to human experiences that can not just be counted or expressed in numbers (Gephart & Rynes, 2004). Purposive and snowballing sampling was used to identify respondents (Burnham et al., 2008:108). In-depth interviews (IDIs), focus groups discussions (FGDs) and observations were used to explore, analyze, observe and interpret personal perceptions, behaviors, narratives and experiences. Respondents included serving and retired police officers, members of Civil Society, community policing and neighbourhood watch groups and common citizens.

The study deployed phenomenological analysis to collect and analyse data. This method was most appropriate for this study because individuals who were directly involved with community policing spoke about their lived-experiences on challenges affecting community policing. Interviews were conducted in a local language, Chichewa and transcribed to English. Secondary documents and interview transcripts and data were managed and analyzed using Atlas.Ti8 (Sorato, 2020). The researcher developed a codebook using inductive and deductive methods to identify and organize emerging themes. Being qualitative, the study was limited by sample size of 66 respondents which was relatively small. Inadequate academic and scholarly research on this topic in Malawi was another limitation.

## 4. Literature Review

### 4.1 Community Policing: The Concept, Definition and Goals

Formal concepts of community policing began in the late 1970s in the United States and the United Kingdom in an attempt to increase the legitimacy of the police in the eyes of citizens (Moore, 1992:99; Corder, 2014:148). It was an intentional re-introduction of olden "beat cop" approach to dealing with crime and disorder (Bullock, 2013). According to OSCE (2008:5), "community policing is defined as a philosophy and organizational strategy that promotes a partnership-based, collaborative effort between the police and the community to more effectively and efficiently identify, prevent and solve problems of crime, the fear of crime, physical and social disorder, and neighbourhood decay in order to improve the quality of life for everyone". Moore (1992) and Corder (2014) also define community policing as a philosophy that promotes organizational strategies, which support the systematic use of working partnerships and problem-solving techniques between police and community, to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety concerns such as crime, social disorder, and fear of crime. In the co-production discourse, community policing can be described as "the concept where police officers and private citizens and communities working together to help solve community problems" (Trajanowicz, Kappeler, Gaines & Bucqueroux, 1998:3). In Malawi, the manual on community policing (2019:1) defines community policing as a strategy of police work, based on the idea that police officers and the community can work together, resolving in various creative ways, problems at the level of the local community relating to crime, fear of crime, various forms of social deviance, and several other safety challenges.

#### 4.1.1 Goals of Community Policing

Community policing aims at establishing and maintaining successful working relationships between police agencies and the public to reduce crime (Portland State University, 2011). In Malawi, the manual on community policing postulates that the main goal of community policing was to bridge the gap between the police and the community (p. 24). Part II of the Police Act of 2009, section 119, provides the following as key objectives of community policing:



- Establishing and maintaining partnership between police and the community.
- Promoting communication between the police and the community.
- Promoting cooperation between the police and the community in fulfilling the needs of the community regarding policing.
- Improving the rendering of police services to the community at national, regional and district levels.
- Promoting joint identification of problems and solving of such problems by the police and the community.

#### 4.2 Definition of Co-Production

In the 70's Ostrom (1996; 1979), defined co-production as 'the potential relationships that could exist between the "regular" producer (street-level police officers, schoolteachers, or health workers) and "clients" (complainants, road users, pupils or patients) who want to be transformed into safer, better educated, educated, or healthier people.' Norman (1984), cited in Loeffler and Watt (2009), Byle, Clark and Burns (2006) define co-production as working with or in the place of professionals where citizens and users more directly and actively participate in the production or delivery of public service, undertaking some of the activities formerly carried out by professionals. Co-production is based on voluntary efforts by individuals and groups to enhance the quality and/or quantity of the services (Pestoff, 2006). The concept started in the 1970s and has since gained track in the production of public goods and services alongside professionals (Loeffler & Bovaird, 2019; Gawłowski, 2018:73).

#### 4.3 Community Policing and Co-Production

The introduction of community policing to improve actively citizenry participation in crime prevention led to the growth of co-production in the area of public safety (Moore, 1992; Corder, 2014). Community policing as a model of co-producing public safety and security services started as an attempt to increase the legitimacy of the police in the eyes of citizens (Corder, 2014). Community policing served as an alternative to traditional, reactive policing styles that heavily relied on motorized

patrols, rapid response to criminal acts and disorder, and enforcement of criminal law (Bullock, 2013). Approaches to co-production of public safety and security include neighborhood watch, CCTV, property marking, watch dogs, purchasing of guns, vigilantism and private security guards (Szescilo, 2017; Eijk, Steen & Verschuere, 2017).

Community policing manifests itself very differently in different parts of the world (Newman & Nalla, 2013). While there was some semblance in community policing occurring in Malawi and South Africa, there were huge disparities with community policing occurring in Kenya, Gambia and Madagascar (Newman & Nalla, 2013). Despite community policing gaining momentum and receiving massive support from government, civil society organizations and private citizens, it continues to face a myriad of challenges.

### 5. Challenges Affecting Community Policing as a Form of Co-Production

Community policing as a form of co-production faces several challenges including; corruption, human rights abuse, police neglect of their duties, volunteerism, lack of joint patrols, attacks and injuries on community police members and lack of feedback from the police (Obeagu, 2014; Uhnöo & Löfstrand, 2018; Divon, 2012). For example, Ikuteyij (2008) argues that the citizen's belief that the police are corrupt and cannot be trusted, is a threat to the success of community policing. Obeagu (2014), in Nigeria, found that abuse of human rights by both the police and members of community policing and neighbourhood watch groups greatly affected community participation in the co-production of public safety and security. Absence of joint patrols is another challenge affecting implementation of community policing in many counties. Uhnöo & Löfstrand (2018) in Sweden found that it is difficult for volunteers to maintain their legitimacy in police activities, unless they are accompanied by uniformed police officers, they feel neglected and demotivated. Zikhali (2019) in Zimbabwe found that the communities were more willing to support the police with resources if they conducted joint patrols. Literature also shows that elements of the police neglecting their responsibilities was evident at the time community policing was being introduced in South Africa (Pelser, 1999). Pelsler argues that Community Police Forums (CPF) begun to function as the means by which additional resources were provided to the

police to enable them to enhance their service delivery, at that juncture, the police left some of their duties to CPFs. Yuning et al. (2011, as cited in Mutupha et al., 2022), further discussed the misconception by some people who perceive introduction of community policing as "weakening the ability of police to fight crime or simply transferring the responsibility of law enforcement from the police to the community so that police can escape the blame for the worsening crime problems". Lack of police feedback to the community as well as to members of CPF and NHW groups was another challenge affecting community policing (Islam, 2018; Rakgoadi, 1995; Amu et al., 2023). From above literature, which is predominantly from foreign jurisdictions, a number of challenges facing implementation of community policing as a form of co-production have been highlighted. This study brings out challenges affecting implementation of community policing as a form of co-production in Lilongwe.

## 6. Results and Discussion

### 6.1 Demographic Data of Respondents

Data for the study was collected through Key Informant Interviews (KII), FGDs, desk research as well as through physical observations. Fifty (50) respondents participated in the KII, and these were: 17 active police officers of various ranks, four (4) retired police officers all of senior ranks, seven (7) members of the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), twelve (12) members of community police forums/ crime prevention panels (CPF/CPFs), five (5) members of neighbourhood watch group (NHW), five (5) ordinary members of the community who were beneficiaries of co-production in the area of public

safety and security. Three (3) FGDs (n=16) were conducted with active police officers, CPF members and NHW group members respectively. Total number of respondents for the study was 66, of which, 16 were females (24.2%) and 50 were males (75.7%) (see Table 1 below).

### 6.2 Corruption

Participants shared their views, experiences and perception on the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that corruption was a stumbling block in the co-production process of public safety and security. Options of strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree was used rate participants opinions. Table 2 on the next page represents the findings.

All retired police officers (n=4) strongly felt that corruption was one of the key challenges facing implementation of community policing. Majority of active police officers (n=15/17) agreed while 8 active police officers strongly agreed and 2 officers remained neutral. A majority of CSO members (n=6/7); CPF members (n=10/12); community members/citizens (n=5) and NHW members (n=4/5) strongly agreed that corruption was a key challenge rocking implantation of community policing. A majority of participants from three FGDs strongly agreed that corruption was a major challenge to implementation of community policing.

A retired police officer:

*"As of now, when people see every police officer, they just see a cruel person, a thief. You know the way the way they say that the police are corrupt."*

**Table 1: Demography of Respondents**

Category	Male	Female	Urban	Rural	Age Group	Total
Police Officers (active)	14	3	9	8	25-60	17
Rt. Police	3	1	2	2	55-65	4
CPF	9	3	6	6	20-60	12
NHW	5	-	5	-	20-30	5
CSO	5	2	7	-	30-65	7
Community Members	2	3	3	2	30-50	5
FGD	12	4	11	5	30-55	16
Total	50	16	43	23	20-65	66

Source: Author

**Table 2: Corruption as a Co-Production Challenge**

Category	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Police Officers	n=8/17	n=7/17	n=2/17	0	0
Rt. Police	n=4/4	0	0	0	0
CSO	n=6/7	n=1/7	0	0	0
CPF	n=10/12	n=2/12	0	0	0
Community Members	n=5/5	0	0	0	0
NHW	n=4/5	n=1/5	0	0	0
Total	n=37/50	n=11/50	n=2/50	0	0

Source: Author

*So, every police officer is just a thief. Yes, since they announce on TV that the police are number one of all departments in terms of corruption. So, when you move in the streets, especially if you board a minibus, the moment they see a police officer they just say "You see that police officer? He is about to steal; he left his house without food."*

*close the area. They say "we have closed the area; you need enough permission to pass".*

A rural member of CPF:

*"..., some members of CPF don't understand, like sometimes when they meet someone at night, they can beat that person ...".*

### 6.3 Human Rights Abuse and Misconduct by CPF and NHW Groups

Participants shared their views, opinions and experiences on the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that CPF and NHW members violated human rights and abused people they came into contact with especially during night patrols. A majority of active and retired police officers (n=14/21) strongly agreed having witnessed or heard that CPF and NHW members abused peoples' rights particularly those coming from night shifts, drinking joints, entertainment places as well as from prayer houses. A majority of CSO (5/7) leaders strongly agreed that CPF and NHW members abused peoples' rights. A majority of members of the community (n=4/5) agreed that CPF and NHW members abused people's rights especially during the night. All five (5) members of NHW group from area 49 remained neutral on this area. FGDs also agreed that CPF members abused human rights. They were involved in beatings and extortion.

A police officer from urban:

*"If you are a police officer and you staying in the location ... at night. If they tell you please sit, you have to sit down. You will sit down and explain yourself. "I am a police officer", "okay sir, sorry, please proceed. If they mount roadblocks, they*

### 6.4 Police Neglect of their Duties to CPF and NHW

Views, opinions and experiences on the extent to which community policing changed police approach to crime prevention, arresting offenders and bringing them to justice to members of community police forums and members of the community in general revealed that all members of CPF (n=12) felt that community policing had to a very great extent created a lazy police officer who instead of going to local areas to arrest criminals, had resorted to writing letters to village headmen and local leaders to arrest and bring suspects to police. A majority of active and retired police officers (n=16/21) felt community policing had made the police work easier because the police were now delegating members CPF and members of the community to perform some of their functions. All five (5) members of NHW group felt that the police were no longer fulfilling its mandate. A majority of members of the community (n=3/5) felt the police neglected their job by unnecessarily delegating their duties to members of the community. FGDs shared the views echoed by NHW groups.

A retired officer:

*"The police are used to writing letters to community policing to catch offenders and deliver them*

*to the police. So, it brought in some laziness in the police. We have abandoned our responsibility and left it for the people".*

A rural CPF member said:

*"Someone can come to police to lodge complaint and police will give them a letter addressing us to bring the suspect to police. I can say police work is now just administration".*

## 6.5 Volunteerism

Results showed that a majority of active and retired police officers (n=17/21) strongly agreed that volunteerism contributed to demotivation among CPF and NHW members. All members of community policing (n=12); NHW (n=5); CSOs (n=7); citizens (n=5) and all three FGDs strongly agreed that volunteerism strongly contributed to low motivation thereby reducing productivity of community policing. A majority of respondents from both urban areas (n=30/32) and rural areas (n=14/18) strongly agreed that volunteerism contributed to low motivation among community police and neighbourhood watch members.

A rural CPF member:

*"It's very sad that all that we do, we do it for free. There is no single day that we were given even a bonus of the job well done but we work day and night. As a result, the youth shun away from community policing activities just because it's voluntary and there is no reward. They would rather go and do piece works".*

## 6.6 Lack of Joint Patrols as Motivational Challenge

Responses were disaggregated according to police officers and non-police officers as well as according to Lilongwe Urban and Lilongwe Rural. Results showed that a majority of active police officers (n=13/17) did not agree that lack of joint patrols was a major demotivating factor to CPF and NHW performance. On the other hand, all retired police officers (n=4) strongly agreed that lack of joint patrols demotivated CPF and NHW groups. All members of community policing (n=12) strongly agreed that lack of joint patrols demotivated CPF and NHW performance. Majority of respondents from urban areas (n=23/32) agreed that joint patrols acted as source

of motivation to CPF and NHW groups. A majority of respondents from rural areas (n=14/18) agreed that lack of joint patrols demotivated CPF members.

A member community from an urban:

*"Joint patrols are necessary. They are a motivation to the members of community forum. And also, people may know that members of the community forum are not alone, they got police at their back".*

## 6.7 Attacks, Injuries and Intimidation on CPF and NHW Members

Results showed that all the 12 participants from CPF indicated that members of CPF were often attacked, assaulted, injured and intimidated when executing community police and neighbourhood watch duties. All the 6 participants from NHW groups complained of frequent attacks, assaults and injuries on night patrols. 17 active and retired police officers agreed with the sentiments echoed by CPF and NHW members. Members of the community and CSO did not say anything on this area.

A member urban CPF:

*"If we apprehended a person and two or three days later the person is released from police custody, for sure we will not see eye to eye with that person and leaving our lives at risk. What I have said is the critical one, people want to see community policing failing. Another challenge is that our lives are at risk. We face intimidation from community members who are not comfortable with community forum".*

## 6.8 Lack of Police Feedback

Majority of active and retired police officers (n=14/21) indicated that lack of feedback by police had to a greater extent affected community's participation in co-production. Majority of members of the CSO leaders (n=5/7) also indicated that lack of feedback on issues that affect complainants and other members of the community to greater extent negatively affected people's participation in community policing. Majority members of the community police forums (CPF) (n=10/12) and members of the community (n=4/5) to greater extent felt betrayed by the police actions of not giving feedback especially where they (CPF) brought a suspect to police or where members of the community complained about of crime and the police fails to give feedback or updates.



A rural CPF member:

*"For example, it may happen that police have released a suspect which was arrested by community forum without letting the members of CPF know of the reasons for the release".*

A resident from urban:

*"They don't give feedback. They asked you what happened but they don't come back to give information about what they have done so far".*

## 7. Discussion

### 7.1 Corruption

Findings indicate that a majority of respondents strongly agreed that corruption was a major challenge that hindered community policing as a form of co-production to bear more dividends in Lilongwe. Respondents believed that police corruption deflected the community and CPF from fully participating in co-production. These sentiments were also echoed in the recent study by Mtupha and Zhu (2022). Literature from other countries, such as South Africa, also supports this finding. In South Africa, a study by Govender & Pillay (2022) also found that corruption had a significant negative impact on people's trust in the police. According to Sabet (2014), corruption reduces the incentive for people to report crime to police. The community dislikes corrupt officers who release suspects after receiving bribes. Interestingly, findings of this study reveal that some serving police officers remained quiet on the issues of corruption. Such quietness from serving police officers was an indication that there were still many police officers who lived in denial on the existence of corruption amongst them. This mindset has to be changed if the fight against corruption was to be won. In summary, it is argued that police corrupt, corruption by CPFs and NHW groups remains a big barrier to community participation in co-production.

### 7.2 Human Rights Abuse and Misconduct by CPF and NHW Groups, Lack of Joint Patrols and Police Abdication of Their Functions

The study found that, CPF and NHW groups violated and abused people's rights in the course conducting community policing duties. This finding agreed to findings from other studies in Africa such as Nigeria, where Obeagu (2014), found that abuse of human

rights by both the police and members of CPF and NHW groups were rampant and greatly affected community participation in the co-production of public safety and security. Interestingly, CPF and NHW members did not respond to a question on this area. This could be interpreted as an indication of accepting wrong doing on their part. It is therefore important that members of CPF and NHW be properly trained and oriented before commencing their duties. Co-production can never be successful if the people you are expected to work with feel abused and harassed.

At same time human rights violations and harassment could be mitigated if police and the community conducted joint patrols. Interestingly, a majority of active police officers (n=13/17) did not agree that lack of joint patrols was a demotivating factor to CPF and NHW performance. This may be an indicator that most police officers do want to be held accountable and that there was a portion of police officers who have not fully embraced community policing. All other categories of respondents indicated that lack of joint patrols was a major challenge and demotivated the community from community policing. Joint patrols help to enhance accountability on both police officers and CPF and NHW groups (USAID, 2020). Joint patrols were a source of motivation to CPFs and NHW groups. In fact, Uhnöo & Löfstrand (2018), in their study in Sweden, also found that community police volunteers maintained their legitimacy in policing activities when they were accompanied by uniformed police officers or joint patrols. Similarly, Zikhali (2019) in Zimbabwe found that the communities were more willing to support the police with resources if they conducted joint patrols. Joint patrols also help to prevent attacks, assaults, injuries and intimidation on CPF and NHW groups when executing their duties.

The challenge of rights violations is also exacerbated by police abdication of their duties. The study found that since the start of community policing, the police have greatly neglected their duties by delegating most of their responsibilities to the community and CPF. Literature from other countries such as South Africa attests to this finding. In South Africa, Pelser (1999) found that community policing made the police abandon some of their legislative functions to CPFs. Community members in the FGDs argued that delegation is a demotivating factor for their community participation. Citizens would like to see the police work together with people.

### 7.3 Volunteerism and Lack of Police Feedback

Findings also revealed that another key factor that slowed co-production of public safety and security is the voluntary approach in implementation of the philosophy. All respondents from rural areas strongly agreed that volunteerism was a great hindrance to success of community policing. In the urban area the views were mixed. Rural CPF and NHW members were so demotivated to perform police functions without any compensation. They expressed strong reservations with doing such a difficult job at no reward. Monthly contributions toward CPF and NHW groups may explain this deference between rural and urban respondents. Therefore, there is need to change the policy approach and introduce a small honorium in order to enhance community participation in co-production of public safety and security.

Lack of feedback from the police on issues of safety and security was another challenge. A majority of respondents expressed frustration with the way police conducted investigations. Most respondents were very dissatisfied with lack of feedback on progress of police investigations into their cases. These findings agreed with the findings on similar studies from Bangladesh, South Africa and Indonesia where lack of police feedback to the community they serve as well as to members of community policing and NHW groups was equally found to be a huge challenge in implementation of community policing (Islam, 2018; Rakgoadi, 1995; Amu et al., 2023). For citizens to have trust in the police and its systems, there is need for constant feedback to the community.

## 8. Conclusion and Recommendations

Although community policing continues to be heralded as the best approach to solve community safety and security problems, it remains affected by a myriad of challenges for it to produce tangible results in the area of improving the quality of life of the people in many jurisdictions including Lilongwe in Malawi (Mutupha & Zhu, 2022; Jenny, 2008). Key challenges revealed by study include corruption, human rights abuse and misconduct by community police members, lack of joint patrols, police neglect of their duties, volunteerism, attacks and injuries on community police members and lack of feedback from the police. To mitigate these challenges and make co-production of public safety and security

more vibrant, strong sanctions must be put on corrupt police officers as well as on community police members who abuse people's rights. Police officers must follow laid down procedures when conducting their duties, they must not be lazy. Police officers must also be encouraged to conduct patrols jointly with members of CPF and NHW in order to instill confidence in them. Much as the Police Act presents co-production of public safety and security as a voluntary undertaking, that approach is proving less productive. Finally, findings showed that, for community policing to be sustained, those involved must be compensated.

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# Lecturers' Perceived Challenges in the Implementation of National Certificate Vocational Curriculum at One Technical and Vocational Education and Training College in the Eastern Cape Province

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**Abstract:** Curriculum implementation is considered as one of the most important phases of any curriculum reform. Thus, the achievement of intended curriculum goals mainly depends on how the particular curriculum is implemented. This study explored the TVET college lecturers' perceived challenges in the implementation of National Certificate Vocational (NCV) curriculum, focusing on engineering fields. The study adopted an interpretive qualitative case study research approach to investigate the phenomenon. Five TVET college lecturers were purposively sampled from a population of lecturers in the selected TVET College. Data were collected using semi-structured face-to-face interviews and observations. Data collected were transcribed manually and analysed using thematic analysis. The results showed that lecturers experience a variety of challenges that hinder the efficient implementation of the NCV curriculum, which include, inadequate resources, lack of support, lack of practical skills and industry exposure, as well as diverse students' background knowledge. The findings from the perceptions of lecturers advocate for government funding for the development of infrastructure, and government together with other stakeholders, such as SETAs and policy makers, should work closely to establish industrial training programmes that will be mandatory to all TVET lecturers. Furthermore, government should formulate and ensure effective implementation of policies on college-industry partnership, and there should be a contractual arrangement to ensure effective collaboration.

**Keywords:** TVET, NCV, Curriculum implementation, Challenges, Skills

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## 1. Introduction

The importance of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) has increased over the past years as countries attempt to create a workforce that is qualified to sustain their economy (Paryono, 2017). As a result, many countries throughout the world are constantly reforming their curricula in an effort to address the needs of the fast-changing world (Gouédard, Pont, Hyttinen & Huang 2020). South Africa is no exception, as its TVET sector has experienced a series of educational policy reforms since 1994, when democracy first emerged. The introduction of the Further Education and Training (FET) Act No. 98 of 1998 was one of the changes made. This has led to the establishment of 50 larger multi-campus Further Education and Training (FET) colleges through the merging of 152 former technical colleges [Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), 2013]. Subsequently, in 2013 the names of these institutions, which were formerly known as Further Education and Training (FET)

colleges, were changed to Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges.

Two academic qualifications are offered in parallel in TVET colleges, namely the National Accredited Technical Education Diploma (NATED) programmes and National Certificate Vocational (NCV) programmes. The NCV programmes were introduced in 2007 as a direct response to the country's youth unemployment and skills shortage (Engelbrecht, Spencer & Van Der Bijl, 2018). These programmes comprise nineteen specializations in the fields of engineering, business, information and communication technology (ICT), hospitality, and tourism services, and are offered at the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Levels 2, 3, and 4 (DHET, 2015). Needham (2019) asserts that the NCV programmes were developed with the intention of replacing the NATED programmes which were gradually being discontinued. A few years later, the phased out NATED programmes were reinstated due to criticisms from business and industry over

the employability of NCV graduates (Kuehn, 2019). The government made significant financial investments in the TVET college sector, which comprised of R1.9 million in 2006, R2.5 million in 2012, and an additional R17.4 billion in 2013, to support the development and implementation of the NCV programmes (Badenhorst, & Radile, 2018). However, despite this significant support, the implementation of the NCV programmes appears to have been characterised by several challenges and criticisms. Literature suggests that the NCV programmes are failing to achieve the objectives envisioned by the curriculum developers (Engelbrecht, Spencer & Van Der Bijl, 2018; Sefhokgole, Ramaligela & Makgato, 2022; Terblanche & Bitzer, 2018). The implication is that there is a gap between the anticipated curriculum goals and the enacted curriculum.

From the above, it is quite clear that there is a need to understand the factors that either support or hinder lecturers from implementing the NCV curriculum effectively. Hence, this study explored the lecturers' perceived challenges in the implementation of the NCV curriculum. It is anticipated that the findings might inform the development of targeted professional development programmes for lecturers to help them overcome the challenges they perceive. Further, the findings could be used by lecturers and policymakers to advocate for changes in curriculum implementation practices or policies that better support lecturers. According to Palestina, Pangan and Ancho (2020), effective curriculum implementation involves different levels, from the setup of the classroom for instruction to the policy-making authorities (administration and management). The author further emphasised that it is essential that practitioners possess both theoretical and practical foundations on the strategies and procedures that can be used to accomplish the ultimate goal of curriculum, which is the academic achievement of students. Moreover, future research in the field of curriculum development and implementation can be built on the findings of this study, leading to more effective educational practices.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Theoretical Literature

There are several theoretical frameworks on curriculum implementation. However, this study adopted the Rogan and Grayson's (2003) theory of curriculum implementation (TCI). The Rogan and Grayson's

(2003) theory was chosen because it is pertinent to the implementation of curricula, particularly the NCV curriculum which is practically oriented. In the study conducted by Govender (2018), TCI provided a useful means of contextualising teachers' viewpoints on the support obtained for putting new curricular revisions into effect. In Furiwai and Singh-Pillay's (2020) study, the TCI served the purpose of determining the extent to which the requirements of the Life Sciences Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) were met about the implementation of the required practical examination. Three profiles were identified by Rogan and Grayson (2003) in their theory of curriculum implementation: the implementation profile, the ability to foster innovation, and external organization support. In essence, the profile of implementation attempts to comprehend and convey the degree to which the aspirations of a set of curricular ideas are being put into reality (Rogan & Grayson, 2003). It also acknowledges that a curriculum will be implemented in innovative ways as there are instructors who are teaching it. The interaction between students in the classroom, how science is used in practical work, how science is incorporated into society, and evaluation procedures are the components of the Profile of Implementation. The elements that support or hinder the implementation of a new curriculum are considered in the Capacity to Support Innovation profile. The sub-constructs that make up the capacity to support innovation component include provision of physical resources, teacher and learner factors, and management of school environment (Rogan & Grayson, 2003). In the context of this study, all the factors that hamper the enactment of NCV curriculum are included in this construct. The construct of support from external organisations focuses on the assistance provided by institutions other than the school, such as government agencies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and unions for teachers and internal school-based support initiatives that collaborate with the educational institution to promote creativity. When there are insufficient resources and inadequate support, such as professional development, lecturers choose not to enact the new curriculum and carry on with their original method of instruction.

The TCI of curriculum implementation was selected for this study on the basis that it considers all the key role players as well as additional components including textbooks, classroom facilities, teacher preparedness, and socioeconomic concerns. These elements collectively have a big influence on how

the National Certificate Vocational (NCV) curriculum is being enacted.

## 2.2 Empirical Literature

To obtain further details on the topic, a review of the relevant, peer-reviewed research and articles was done. The relevant research supports the issue and emphasises views for understanding the impediments to the complete adoption of the new curriculum and how lecturers perceive the mechanisms for curriculum support that are already available.

### 2.2.1 Curriculum Implementation

Ibeh (2020) postulates that the ability any curriculum development to succeed or fail depends on how well it is put into practice. The author further claims that implementing a curriculum involves putting the decisions made during the planning stage into action to achieve the goals for which it was created. Curriculum implementation as described by Hakutumbulwa and Kadhila (2022), refers to the methods used by teachers to conduct lessons and administer assessments using the specific materials that are provided in the curriculum. In line with this, Hamunyela, Makaye and Cruz (2022), highlight the importance of understanding the roles played by teachers during the enactment of curriculum. The authors further assert that understanding teachers' roles can provide a better insight of contextual elements that influence how the new curriculum is implemented. Additionally, Mafugu and Abel (2022) posit that the process of curriculum implementation is the stage in which the student participates in learning activities under the guidance of a teacher to maximize learning as demonstrated by the learner's altered behaviour or new viewpoint on issues. From another perspective, Mothowanaga and Gladwin (2021) argue that it is impossible to effectively implement any curriculum without the learners' involvement. The authors further assert that, the process of implementing the curriculum places the learner at its centre. Mothowanaga and Gladwin (2021) also maintain that implementing a curriculum includes using physical resources as well as appropriate instructional strategies and approaches. Another study was conducted by Anene-Okeakwa, Chukwurah and Ikenga (2020) in Nigeria and noted that the implementation of TVET curriculum reform has not met the expectations of the curriculum developers. Research has been done in South Africa on the implementation of recent curriculum reforms (Engelbrecht, Spencer

& Van Der Bijl, 2018; Furiwai & Singh-Pillay, 2020; Letshwene & du Plessis, 2021; Maharajh, Nkosi & Mkhize, 2016). However, much of the discussion in these studies has focused on general education in schools. At the tertiary level, there has been little discussion about the implementation of curriculum reforms, particularly in TVET institutions. Sephokgole, Ramaligela and Makgato (2022) noted that the capacity of lecturers to share their real-world expertise when instructing agricultural programs in TVET colleges, was limited by the lack of infrastructure, equipment, and resources. The findings from Engelbrecht, Spencer and Van Der Bijl's (2018) study highlighted challenges facing the implementation of the National Certificate Vocational (NCV) Tourism programme, including lack of appropriate infrastructure, inadequate academic preparedness of students, as well as lack of partnership between TVET colleges and industries. This study's major flaw is that it only looked at NCV Tourism, which is provided at Level 4 of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). In other words, curriculum implementation is a complex process that requires collaboration among teachers, students, administrators, and other stakeholders. Its success depends on effective planning, communication, assessment, and continuous improvement efforts to ensure that students receive a high-quality education aligned with the intended curriculum. Nevenglosky, Cale and Aguilar (2019) assert that curriculum designs often offer lesson plans, scripts, instructional recommendations, and assessment choices pertaining to a certain set of goals. According to these authors, to ensure that curricular reforms are implemented effectively, it is essential to align instructional methods with the specified educational objectives outlined in the curriculum.

### 2.2.2 Factors That Support and Hinder Effective Curriculum Implementation

According to Hamunyela, Makaye and Cruz (2022), curriculum implementation is a crucial, challenging, and unavoidable phase of any curriculum development. Further, the authors emphasise that for teaching and learning to be effective, sufficient teaching and learning resources need to be available in schools. In relation to these discussions, Nevenglosky, Cale and Aguilar (2019) add that to ensure that curricular reforms are implemented effectively, instructional approaches should be matched to the precise learning objectives specified in the curriculum. However, numerous studies have found that curriculum implementation continues to

be a challenge in schools, since most of the intended outcomes are not being achieved in real classroom settings (Madondo, 2021; Mafugu & Abel, 2022; Muwaniki, McGrath, Manzeke-Kangara, Chamboko & Wedekind, 2022; Rahman, Pandian & Kaur, 2018). Although most of these studies focused on schools, it is significant to note that there are some research findings about the implementation of curriculum at higher education institutions. For instance, the findings from Buthelezi's (2018) study, showed a lack of alignment between student types, lecturers' adaptability with the reform, and curricular reforms. Thus, there is often a knowledge gap between policymakers, curriculum developers, curriculum implementers, and society at large.

This is evident in Molapo and Pillay's (2018) study which identified inadequate teacher preparation, a lack of funding, and excessive paperwork, as some of the factors that hindered effective implementation of Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) by Grade 3 teachers in Limpopo. In the same vein, Furiwai and Singh-Pillay's (2020) study revealed some obstacles that hamper effective implementation of mandatory practical examinations, including insufficient material resources, a language barrier between the medium of instruction and the students' mother tongue, a mismatch between the medium of instruction and the learners' native tongue, the culture of teaching and learning, uncertainty, and lack of confidence among teachers while carrying out practical tasks. According to Palestina, Pangan and Ancho (2020), inadequate teacher support undermines Philippine's ability to implement curriculum effectively. These findings therefore confirm that a gap exists between the curriculum implementation and what must be done to make sure that the new curriculum's objectives are achieved. In another study conducted by Letshwene and du Plessis (2021), the findings revealed various factors impeding the efficient enactment of CAPS in Accounting, including, the time allocated in the annual teaching plan (ATP) for Accounting, which is not enough, teachers who lack the necessary skills to teach financial literacy, as well as learners who lack exposure to Accounting. Engelbrecht, Spencer and Van Der Bijl (2018) identified a mismatch between the envisaged objectives of the NCV Tourism and the implemented curriculum. The authors further highlighted three categories of challenges facing implementation of NCV Tourism programme: programme-related, learner-related and college-related challenges. Mothowanaga and Gladwin's (2021) study aimed to identify challenges

encountered by educators, students, and school administrators in implementing the History curriculum reform in Namibia. Overcrowding in the classrooms, a shortage of textbooks, inadequate resources, such as libraries, a lack of government funding, and poor time management were some of the challenges revealed by this study. One of the challenges highlighted by Nevenglosky, Cale and Aguilar (2019), is lack of professional development programmes for training the curriculum implementers (teachers). According to the authors, professional development helps teachers feel less anxious about integrating new curricula. Similarly, a study conducted by Govender (2018) revealed that teachers perceived lack of professional development programmes as the primary factor that hinder effective curriculum implementation. According to the author, teachers felt that they were not sufficiently supported as there were no coaching, monitoring and evaluation strategies to help implement the necessary curriculum changes.

It is clear from the above literature that the enactment of a new curriculum presents several challenges for curriculum implementers such as teachers, head of departments, curriculum managers, and students. It was also brought up that governments lacked the resources to support trainings, even though they are responsible for paying the training of all teachers. For the teachers to successfully implement the curriculum, they need a lot of support from various stakeholders, including government. Thus, Professional development programmes for teachers are necessary to give them new pedagogical skills and subject-matter expertise.

### **3. Research Methods/Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Paradigm, Approach, Design**

The study adopted an interpretive qualitative case study research approach to explore the perceptions of lecturers towards the implementation of NCV curriculum. The interpretive paradigm is relevant because it made it possible for the researcher to compile extensive, detailed information outlining the distinctive experiences of the lecturers being studied (Davies & Fisher, 2018). Since the researcher aimed to comprehend participants' experiences with the phenomenon under investigation – in this example, the lecturers' reported challenges implementing the NCV curriculum – a qualitative research approach was appropriate (Creswell, 2018).



### 3.2 Population and Sampling

Purposive sampling was used to select five lecturers as they were considered to have rich information based on their knowledge and experiences in classroom and workshop practices (Maree, 2016). All lecturers offering NCV programmes at the selected TVET college in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa make up the study's research population. In this study, five lecturers were purposively selected because they were considered to have rich information based on their knowledge and experiences in classroom and workshop practices.

### 3.3 Data Collection

Kabir (2016) describes data collection as the act of acquiring and assessing data on relevant variables in a methodical and defined way so as to address research questions, test hypotheses, and assess results. The author further emphasises that the aim of data collection is to obtain high-quality evidence, which enables extensive data analysis and the development of a solid response to the issues that have been put forth. According to Creswell (2018), qualitative researchers often collect data from a variety of sources, including observations, interviews, documents, and audio-visual materials rather than relying on a single data source. As suggested by Creswell (2018), semi-structured interviews and semi-structured observations were used as data collection instruments for this study. To ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the qualitative study, the researcher taped the interviews, transcribed them, and had the participants cross-check the transcriptions. In addition to semi-structured interviews, classroom observation was used to investigate the teaching methods of five chosen lecturers. Classroom observations helped the researcher to identify the aspects of the curriculum that were being implemented. The researcher documented the classroom activities by recording the various impressions as they emerged when lecturers were observed while giving classes in their normal classroom settings.

### 3.4 Data Treatment and Analysis

In this study, audio recordings of semi-structured interviews were verbatim translated into text. The scripts that had been transcribed and coded were divided into groups based on themes derived from important ideas. The classroom observations data

were analysed using pre-established theoretical themes. The primary focus of the observation schedule was on both the classroom setting and practices.

## 4. Findings and Discussions

The data collected from the interviews indicated that lecturers faced a number of obstacles that hindered their ability to effectively execute the NCV curriculum. Under the theme of challenges that lecturers experienced when implementing the NCV curriculum, the following subthemes were found, inadequate resources, lack of support, lack of practical skills and industry exposure, as well as diverse students' background knowledge. These subthemes are discussed below.

### 4.1 Inadequate Resources

*Research question: What type of resources and infrastructure are available for teaching the practical component of NCV programmes?*

The results of the study show that inadequate resources make it difficult to successfully implement the curriculum. One of the common lecturers' perceptions on the barriers that impede effective implementation of NCV curriculum, was the lack of resources, which included adequately equipped workshops, laboratories, or simulation rooms, as well as other teaching and learning materials. One male participant, L1 noted that:

*As I have already said that NCV curriculum is vocational in nature, and it has a practical component. Therefore, the NCV needs to be taught practically in workshops. Now, it becomes a bit challenging because some workshops do not have machines to conduct these practical trainings. We end up teaching theory only. So, it is a challenge because students do not gain the skills required by industry.*

Similarly, participant L4 had this to say:

*When we teach NCV engineering subjects, we need to integrate theory and practice. Like when your lesson is about car engine, you need to demonstrate to students so that they can see what you are talking about. But here in this college, we cannot do this because there is a lack of resources for practical training.*

Echoing the same sentiments, L5 said that:

*Our college does not have enough workshops for conducting practical experiences to our students. Not having a workshop for a subject like the Automotive Repairs is a serious problem because my students are unable to acquire the practical experience before they go to the cooperate world.*

The extracts corroborated with Furiwai & Singh-Pillay's (2020) findings which show that teachers were unable to successfully execute the new curriculum due to a shortage of resources. Evident from these findings is that lecturers have abandoned the teaching of practical work because of a lack of resources. Some participants reported that the only time they engage students in practical work was during the Integrated Summative Assessment Task (ISAT) which is carried out towards the end of the academic year. According to the findings, participants believed that the availability of infrastructural resources, such as simulation rooms and workshops could be extremely important in improving the way NCV curriculum is implemented. This supports the view of Rogan & Grayson (2003), that when there are not enough resources for teaching and learning, lecturers decide not to implement the new curriculum, but continue with their traditional way of teaching.

Findings from observations confirmed that there is lack of resources and infrastructure for conducting practical training. This corroborated with the assertion by Sephokgole, Ramaligela and Makgato (2022). Lack of resources and workshop infrastructure could have a negative impact in the acquisition of practical skills.

#### 4.2 Lack of Support

*Research question: What kind of support, if any, do you get when implementing the NCV curriculum?*

Regarding the support they got when implementing the NCV curriculum, participant L2 had this to say:

*I think, I require a lot of support since I lack the necessary training to instruct the NCV curriculum. I am new in this college and no training has been provided for new staff since I have joined the college seven months ago.*

In line with the above findings, participant L3 noted that:

*Very few teachers who were chosen to attend workshops on curriculum implementation did so in a week, but when they arrive at the college, they cram their expertise into two to three hours.*

This suggests that NCV lecturers receive very little support in implementing the curriculum. It also emerged from the findings that before NCV curriculum was implemented, a cascade model of INSET with a short once-off training was used. This clearly indicates that the implementation process of NCV curriculum was underestimated and given insufficient resources and support. According to Nevenglosky, Cale and Aguilar (2019), support from management is important for lecturers to succeed in the implementation of new curriculum. Additionally, Rogan and Grayson (2003) argue that successful lecturer preparation is essential for curriculum implementation since it helps them comprehend the changes and how best to execute them. Thus, lecturers need to be supported through professional development programmes to boost their confidence and get a deeper understanding of the curriculum goals.

#### 4.3 Lack of Practical Skills and Industry Exposure in Lecturers

*Research question: How do your pedagogical qualification and industrial experience help you to implement the NCV curriculum?*

According to DHET (2013), lecturers offering NCV programmes are expected to have subject specific knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and industrial experience. However, the findings of this study indicate that very few lecturers possess experience from the industry. Participant L2 said the following:

*I do not have practical skills in the subjects of my specialisation because we did not get practical training at the university where I studied. Secondly, I have never worked for any industry. I have also never attended any training organised by the college. I need to be developed on the practical aspect of my subjects.*

In contrast to the above, participant L5 reported that:

*In the field of engineering, the management organise training for us as lecturers where we are trained on the practical components of our specialisations.*

*They are short courses because we attend these training sessions during the college vacations. The main purpose of these trainings is to make us keep abreast with the latest developments in the industry.*

The excerpts above indicate that some lecturers lack skills, and they are unable to engage their students in practical and hands-on experiences. This was supported by the classroom observation data during participant L1's observations. The lecturer's lessons were too theoretical and could not assist the students to acquire the necessary skills and competencies. It also came out from the findings that some lecturers did not have industry work experience, and this negatively affected their impartation of hands-on skills to students. This is despite DHET's (2013) recommendation that TVET lecturers should have subject knowledge, pedagogical knowledge as well as workplace or industrial experience relevant to the areas of their specialisations. The observation findings revealed that lecturers were unable to link their lessons with the real-life situations.

#### 4.4 Diverse Students Background Knowledge

*Research question: How do you accommodate students from different academic background?*

Varied levels of prior knowledge among students were also one of the common challenges raised by participants. Participant L3 reported that:

*In my classroom, I have a combination of students with Grades 9, 10, 11 and 12. It is difficult to teach these students because they have different cognitive levels. Those with Grade 9 need more attention than those with Grade 11 or 12.*

Participant L4 had this to say:

*The challenge that I have is that students with Grade 9 are admitted to NCV and they are still young. They are still young and being in the same class as those with Grades 11 and 12, makes them feel uncomfortable. They end up not attending classes.*

The above findings clearly indicate that lecturers are faced with a serious challenge as they are expected to use various teaching methods in one lesson to accommodate all groups of students.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Curriculum implementation is essential to curriculum development because it consciously fosters educational innovations to address an identified problem in the educational system. It is important to note that understanding the lecturers' perceived challenges in the implementation of the NCV curriculum could provide better support for student development and enhance their readiness for employment.

Overall, the findings showed that the following issues prevented the NCV curriculum from being implemented successfully: a lack of workshops or laboratories, a lack of workshop equipment, a lack of skills or training in lecturers, and a lack of support. Infrastructure and resources should get a significant consideration since it negatively affects the acquisition of practical skills, which is the main goal of the NCV curriculum. The researcher made the following suggestions: Government and TVET colleges should make considerable investments in ongoing professional development to support and encourage lecturers towards NCV curriculum implementation. Further, lecturers should be provided with sufficient resources that will enable them to implement the NCV curriculum successfully.

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# The Post-Apartheid Government's Challenges to Build the Sustainable Higher Education: A Case Study of South African Rural Universities

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**Abstract:** The African National Congress government has always been a major stakeholder in institutions of higher education in South Africa. The higher education in South Africa like the rest of the world is expensive and it cannot be accessible and afforded by everyone. The main aim of this paper is to investigate the post-apartheid government's challenges to building sustainable higher education in South Africa. From the qualitative standpoint, coupled with the case study research design, this paper used a purposive sample to select 15 participants. In this study, the collection of data was divided into primary and secondary data. Secondary data were collected through literature reviews while the primary data were collected through and the application of Interviews with Key Informants and analysed using Thematic Content Analysis. The results of this study show inequitable and unjust higher education, the government's financial capacity, mismanagement of funds in the higher education sector, failure to address the demand for free education for all, the post-apartheid government's role in higher education, and intervention by the post-apartheid government in higher education. This paper suggests that the African National Congress government should guarantee all citizens access to high-quality education and make it more affordable. This paper suggests that the government intensifies the search for a better funding model for higher education to address the inequitable and unjust higher education. All stakeholders should work more closely together than they currently do to put an end to the challenges faced by the post-apartheid government to build the sustainable higher education.

**Keywords:** Challenges, Higher education, Post-apartheid government, Rural, Sustainable

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## 1. Introduction

The post-apartheid government that came to power in 1994 inherited an inequitable and unjust higher education system. Inequalities in South Africa's institutions of higher education are still present as a result of historical racial imbalances (Xulu, 2019). The inequality of access to opportunities for higher education had an impact on participation rates in the higher education system (Sehoole & Phatlane, 2013). Even though the gross participation rate in higher education in South Africa was approximately 15 per cent at the dawn of democracy in 1994, it was the highest rate in sub-Saharan Africa; but the lowest when compared to other developed countries. Obvious inequities were observed when gross participation was broken down in terms of race. Africans constituted 80 per cent of the total population but their participation rate in higher education was only 9 per cent. The participation rate

for Coloureds was 13 per cent; for Indians it was 40 per cent; and for Whites it was 70 per cent. These figures show that Africans received the worst treatment under apartheid (Sehoole & Adeyemo, 2016)

Higher education funding has been a topic of public discussion since the beginning of 2015, when the #FeesMustFall student movements erupted in South Africa and students at the University of Cape Town, led by Chumani Maxwele, organised protests calling for the transformation of the university (Hlatshwayo & Fomunyam, 2019). The demonstrators demanded increased government investment and participation in higher education funding in South Africa (Ntombela, Gwala & Sibanda, 2023).

Students called for "free education" in addition to other funding-related demands in response to the difficult economic climate in the nation and what they saw as arbitrary fee increases by

universities that ignored the socioeconomic complexities and challenges that the majority of Black students, who were finding it difficult to pay for their education, faced. Muswede (2017) claims that despite the post-apartheid government's desire to lead the country toward a "ambitious new policy framework" that would see transformational and progressive advancements of the higher education sector moving to ensure that there was access to "quality education for all citizens", it was nevertheless obvious that the government was confronted with lamentable evidence limitations regarding mobilisation of the required resources to cope with. Public worries were raised about the government's absence of a comprehensive plan to finance higher education in the country, particularly in light of efforts to eliminate any form of unequal access to resources for Black and White student populations (Muswede, 2017).

Nearly all of the state-funded universities in South Africa were impacted by the events that led to the #FeesMustFall campaigns and protests by students in the higher education sector in 2015 (Moolman & Jacobs, 2018). Some student leaders were arrested and charged with various charges including among others, public violence and destruction of property (Rabkin, 2019). Since the arrests were seen as government intimidation, harassment, retaliation, and coercion to force students to give up their demands for a "free" education against the government and the universities, the enraged students were further inspired to unleash more violence. Additionally, universities were required to remove all outstanding student debts from their records (Govender, 2021; Macupe, 2021). However, universities would move to counter-fight the efforts (Shepherd, 2021). Students who failed to make loan payments were routinely sent away from universities (Nicolson, 2021). The government and universities were widely condemned for their treatment of the students and their lack of willingness to meet the students' demands. Banton (2021) argues that a long-lasting solution to students' demand for 'free' education for all was missed during the protests that led to universities' nationwide shutdown in 2015, all because of the government's unwillingness to address the demand.

The post-apartheid government in South Africa faces a lack of money for its post-apartheid priorities and ambitions, such as providing education to all of its population, despite having a middle-class

economy and a good resource base compared to other African states (Tjonneland, 2017). The notion of "free" education for all at the higher education level remains unattainable and far-fetched in some sectors of society given the state of South Africa's economy (Sheefeni, 2022). Many interested parties, especially student associations in South Africa's higher education system, strongly disagreed with this stance. Opponents contended that a number of interrelated factors, including mismanagement of funds in the university education sector in South Africa and corruption of higher education and the National Students Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), were impeding progress towards funding "free" university education in the country rather than the government's lack of resources (Samuels, 2021; Wangenge-Ouma, 2021; Dyomfana, 2022; Macupe, 2022). Students may misuse NSFAS (Luckhoff & Mbhele, 2022; Mutele, 2022; Qukula, 2020). The nature of the #FeesMustFall campaigns and student protests, particularly those of 2015, have been the subject of a few studies (Gumede, 2021; Moosa, 2021). However, there are noticeably few studies challenging the notion that free education for all, including the higher education sector, is unsustainable. Lack of adequate funding for higher education would imply higher fees thereby shutting out the poor and reducing the ability of universities contributing to socioeconomic, political and cultural development (Letseka & Maile, 2008).

According to a study conducted in the UK by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), for instance, 20% of students from disadvantaged backgrounds were six times less likely to enrol in higher education than 20% of students from more advantaged backgrounds (Scott & Ivala, 2019). In the United States, parents' income is thought to be the primary determinant of a student's achievement, with 90% of graduating students coming from the top income quartile and 25% from the lower half (Scott & Ivala, 2019). According to Letseka and Maile (2008), 70% of the households of higher education dropouts in South Africa were classified as having "low-income status", with some of the parents making less than R1, 600 a month. Because of this, attending university is all but impossible for the typical South African student. The new democratic government has inherited a complex legacy and struggled to establish a systematically transfigured and transformed system. The post-apartheid government's challenges are the significant and growing problem throughout South Africa. This

paper aims to investigate the post-apartheid government's challenges to build the sustainable higher education. The research to be answered in this paper is: What are the challenges faced by the post-apartheid government to build sustainable higher education in South Africa?

## **2. Literature Review**

A literature review on South Africa's apartheid education system, the post-apartheid government's role in higher education, South Africa's funding mechanisms of higher education, and concluding with curbing the challenges faced by the post-apartheid government in higher education, are the theoretical underpinnings used for this paper.

### **2.1 The Legacy of South Africa's Apartheid Education System**

The South African apartheid educational system is detrimental to a good education. Verwoerd suggested that education should have its roots wholly in Native communities, environments, and landscapes (Giliomee, 2012). The Verwoerdian school system in South Africa was the source of class-based inequality between Blacks and Whites. Once more, Mafukata (2012) noted that Verwoerd's racial system created a South Africa characterised by a double-barreled economy, with rich Whites and destitute Blacks. Msila and Netshitangani (2014) disclose the truth behind J.N. Le Roux's 1945 statement of not giving the Natives any academic education in order for them to do the manual labour in the community. Thus, it is evident that Verwoerd did not act alone when he denied Black people access to high-quality education. Sinyosi (2015) reported on the assertion made by prominent Canadian academic Gwendolen Carter, who supported the apartheid notion that Black South Africans should work for Whites in order to elevate them. Due to the legacy of apartheid, South Africa's post-apartheid government continues to struggle with the triple problems of unemployment, inequality, and poverty (Arko-Achemfuor, 2019; Mdhlela, 2022). This gap does not seem to be closed yet.

### **2.2 The Post-Apartheid Government's Role in Higher Education**

South Africa's post-apartheid government implemented a number of policies aimed at transforming the country's higher education system (Mouton,

Louw & Strydom, 2012). The government has ensured equitable access to higher education irrespective of race or socioeconomic status and great successes have been achieved in this respect (Chaka & Govender, 2017). In a democratic South Africa, education was prioritised for transformation (Harber, 2013). The Bill of Rights of South Africa's Constitution indicates that all South Africans have the right to a basic education, adult basic education and further education, and the government must take reasonable measures to make it progressively available and accessible to the people (Republic of South Africa, 1996). South African government has been spending more on education than any other sector, accounting for roughly 7% of GDP and 20% of total state expenditure. Additionally, the government implemented several policies on higher education directed towards 'the belief that economic development was only possible in the context of a highly skilled workforce and a coordinated policy structure' (Bozalek & Boughey, 2012).

### **2.3 South Africa's Funding Mechanisms of Higher Education**

Higher education is not adequately funded by the government; enrolment pressures and rising expenditures have outpaced the financing (Gqubule, 2021; Walker, 2021; Wangenge-Ouma, 2021; Gumede, 2022). NSFAS was unreliable, and some have questioned if it can continue to be a viable source of financial aid for students (Dibela, 2018). For the 2015-16 fiscal year, higher education had a budget of R30 billion. The percentage of South Africa's GDP that has been allocated to higher education over the past few years has ranged from 0.68% to 0.72% (Cloete, 2015). In contrast to other nations, South Africa has very low expenditures. For example, Brazil spends 0.95% of GDP on higher education; Senegal and Ghana spend 1.4%; Norway and Finland spend more than 2%; and Cuba spends 4.5% (Cloete, 2015). Moreover, higher education receives only 12% of South Africa's total education expenditure. Compared to other comparable countries, where spending is approximately 20%, this is modest (Bozzoli, 2015). To develop a long-term plan for guaranteeing access to higher education, the South African government has to boost spending to a level more in line with international standards, i.e. 1% of GDP (Cloete, 2015).

The government and universities were forced to find an extra R2.6 billion in funding in 2016, at a time

when the South African economy was going through its worst downturn in years, in accordance with the recommendations of the South African Institute for Race Relations, which sets a level of 2.5% of GDP (Wild & Mbatha, 2015). For sustainability and resilience, South Africa must redesign its financial mechanism (Wangenge-Ouma, 2021). Appropriate funding for higher education is necessary to sustain the important national higher education initiatives that benefit the general public. Insufficient financing is provided to the South African System in comparison to other systems. As Universities South Africa (USAf) has often argued, the finance level of the higher education system in South Africa needs to be compared to the funding levels of other successful higher education systems. In 2012, South Africa's ratio was 0.71. Senegal, Chile, Brazil, China, Cuba, China, Finland, Iceland, Malaysia, and Ghana had to offer far more than this.

## 2.4 Curbing the Challenges Faced By the Post-Apartheid Government in Higher Education

The provision of appropriate and high-quality education to formerly disadvantaged communities is one of the South African government's top priorities (Aruleba & Jere, 2022). Alasuutari (2020) asserts that the future depends on taking decisive action to close the digital divide and the growing inequalities. The government has to address South Africa's rural areas' inadequate access to ICT and weak internet connectivity. Again, the South African government gave priority to an intervention like buying mobile data for students, laptops, and tablets (Ndlovu, Ndebele & Mlambo, 2022).

Furthermore, Gower (2020) exhorts the South African government to give money to institutions suffering losses as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak. Again, for resilience and sustainability, South Africa must change the way institutions of higher learning are funded (Wangenge-Ouma, 2021). Again, one of the top tasks of the new government was to address apartheid-era injustices by implementing measures that would give all South Africans access to higher education while also ensuring their success.

## 3. Theoretical Frameworks

### 3.1 Decoloniality Theory

This paper employed Decoloniality Theory (DT). Many academics have contributed to the development of

decoloniality theory; among them are Anibal Quijano and Walter Dignolo, two of the theory's most significant pioneers (Colpani, Mascot & Smiet, 2022). This theory is based on the idea that European colonisation is primarily to blame for the way the modern world operates today. The term "decoloniality" refers to the ongoing process of decolonization (Maart, 2020). The colonial and Eurocentric presumptions that guide the creation and sharing of knowledge in higher education can be contested via the use of decoloniality theory. DT aims to acknowledge and appreciate the various epistemologies and viewpoints of the Global South, particularly those that colonialism and its aftermath have suppressed or ignored. According to Govender and Naidoo (2023), decoloniality theory contributes to the governance of higher education by encouraging a more democratic, inclusive, and transformational curriculum that takes into account the needs, interests, and experiences of both students and society as a whole.

It's critical to highlight that decoloniality is a dynamic concept. Decoloniality and decolonial thinking, on the other hand, aim to think beyond the colonial framework and emphasise the pluriverse of systems of knowledge and thought (or the simultaneous existence of numerous frameworks of knowledge). According to Parashar and Schulz (2021) this refers to an attempt to think relationally and to "think otherwise", that is, to think beyond the colonial categories, hierarchies, and binaries. Santos (2014) critiques the marginalisation, silencing, and delegitimization of indigenous, Third World, and Southern knowledges. According to Santos (2014), the South is a symbol of people's suffering and defiance of colonialism, capitalism, and imperialism. His concept of "epistemologies of the South" highlights that the South is more than just a geographical location, but also a political and intellectual marker – a source of unique knowledge resulting from the experience of various forms of oppression. It does this by designating the distinct epistemologies that have emerged from the South. Once more, by challenging the presumptions, norms, and values that guide higher education institutions' policies, procedures, and practises, DT helps in comprehending the problem of governance in higher education (Govender & Naidoo, 2023). For instance, DT can inquire about how knowledge is created and verified, who has the power and legitimacy to make choices, and how diversity and inclusion are taken into account in the governance of higher education.



Additionally, DT challenges power hierarchies and the predominance of Western epistemologies in educational and non-educational contexts.

Furthermore, during the 2015-2016 student protests, demands for fair access to and decolonization of higher education settings were made. After apartheid, student protests were common in South Africa. The #FeesMustFall movement was successful in drawing attention to the inadequate funding for higher education by planning demonstrations at South African campuses. After the protests, the government promised to increase funding for the student assistance scheme. The protests served as a helpful communication tool, notwithstanding the ongoing worries about the violent actions associated with them (Du Plessis, 2021). The South African model of providing education to the nation's ethnic groups is thought to have been inspired by the colonialism of the indigenous population. Thus, the finance plan for both higher education and general education was based on colonialism. This plan aims to make progress in decolonizing education in the post-apartheid era. Long-standing patterns of power that shape labour, culture, intersubjectivity connections, and knowledge creation arose as a result of colonialism and today transcend far beyond the borders of colonial administrations. This interpretation of "coloniality" aligns with the concepts put out by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015). DT looks at the structural effects that oppressive policies have on the lives of those who were formerly colonised. It seeks to undermine not only the complex structure of power created by colonisation and settler-colonialism, but also the ideologies behind these two subaltern ideologies. In addition to acknowledging the multiplicity of liberatory ideas that arise from diverse settings, it strives for emancipation through the dismantling of the colonial power system. One of the main tenets of DT is the quest of social and epistemic justice, which recognises the pluriversality of our society and its persistent social and economic inequalities. Colonialism fundamentally impacts every aspect of existence, cognition, and organisation, so, it must be addressed (Govender & Naidoo, 2023).

### **3.2 Critical Social Theory**

This paper also used Critical Social Theory, which Horkheimer developed in 1937 at the University of Frankfurt in Germany (Bohman, 2021; Modiba, 2021). Thus, this theory is also frequently referred

to as the Frankfurt School and it focuses on changing society than understanding society. Crossman (2019) and Bohman (2021) contend that a critical social theory aims to critique and transform society as a whole. This group of sociologists concluded that societal structures and cultural assumptions not only influenced but also create social problems, rather than the individual or psychological factors (Bohman, 2021). Therefore, the main aim of critical theory is social transformation and emancipation through critique (Bohman, 2021). The emancipatory function of knowledge is being advanced by critical social theory, a multidisciplinary body of knowledge (Thaba-Nkadimene & Mmakola, 2019). It goes about achieving this by endorsing the importance of criticism in the quest for high-quality education. People must participate in a criticism of the individual, social, and historical processes that lead to oppression to free those who are being held down on all three levels of oppression. This study tries to challenge the traditions and offer solutions for breaking them to ensure the development of critical thinking. This theory is appropriate for this paper since it adequately sheds light on issues related to inequality, unemployment, and poverty. A critical social theory seeks to liberate humans from circumstances enslaving them. A critical social theory admits that quality education from institutions of higher education could mitigate social ill of inequality (Ngcukana, 2018). The researcher asserts that, in contrast to the chosen theory, no alternative theory could effectively highlight and define the problem of this work.

Again, the effectiveness of Critical Social Theory as a theory of crisis, theory of education, and theory of transformative action inform the adoption of this theory (Freeman & Vasconcelos, 2010). A societal transformation, as well as the human capacity building and liberation provided by the provision of high-quality education, can be used to address the problem of poverty, unemployment, and inequality (Modiba, 2018) that is affecting black South Africans in particular. In this paper, post-apartheid education in higher education will be analysed through the lenses of social transformation, human capacity, and liberation provided through the provision of quality education. A plethora of literature has confirmed that institutions of higher education whose education is poor could struggle to advance the boundaries of inequality (Ngcukana, 2018). Critical Social Theory aims to change and critique society by finding the underlying assumptions in social life that prevent people from participating in a

true democracy. Critical Social Theory questions and analyses social structures as well as the relationships of dominance, oppression, and power (Ngubane & Makua, 2021). Furthermore, Ngubane and Makua (2021) assert that Critical Social Theory can support the governance of higher education by addressing concerns such as decolonisation, social justice, equity and inclusivity in the curriculum, pedagogy, research and institutional culture.

### 3.3 The Classical Theory of Education Crisis

The paper adopted Classical Theory of Education Crisis (Rikowski's (2014) theories of education crisis). The Classical Theory of Education Crisis theory rests on the idea that learning about education problems starts with economic crises. In the study's background, the government's economy is in decline and higher education institutions are not adequately funded by the government. Due to the history of South Africa's education system, higher education institutions are unable to finance education. Sarup (1982) makes the assumption right away that an education crisis could be a secondary crisis, dependent on the majority of events that are fundamentally economic in nature. According to The Classical Theory of Education Crisis, developments outside of the education system are more important for understanding the education crisis than those occurring inside it. This theory is relevant to this paper because the government failed to fund education and students protested for free education. Because the capitalist state reorganises, modifies, and eliminates the educational system to further capital accumulation, a crisis in capital accumulation also becomes a crisis in education.

### 3.4 The Autogenous Theory of Education Crisis

The Autogenous Theory of Education Crisis is an effort to understand how advancements in education itself cause education crises. Educational institutions, procedures, and occurrences are the root causes of crises in education. 'Autogenous' signifies that something is produced from within; it's self-generating. Due to Africans' continued poverty, the effects of apartheid legislation are still felt in South Africa's educational system. Once more, there is corruption and financial mismanagement in the NSFAS and university education sectors. It is abundantly evident from Roitman's (2014) argument that adopting the crisis notion eliminates some explanatory options. When it comes to the causes

of education crises caused by fiat, the Autogenous Theory ignores social, political, and economic facets of life (Rikowski, 2017).

## 4. Research Methods

Based on the interpretive paradigm, an exploratory case study, which employed a qualitative research design, was adopted for this paper. In order to gather rich information about the perspectives, experiences, meanings, and opinions of the participants regarding the post-apartheid government's challenges to build the sustainable higher education in South African rural universities. The researcher positioned themselves inside an interpretive paradigm based on Neuman's (2006) views, who contends that an interpretive researcher's objective is to acquire knowledge of social life and discover how people construct meaning in natural contexts. A range of context-rich information sources, including semi-structured key informant interviews and literature reviews, are used to collect comprehensive, in-depth data for the case study investigation (Mohajan, 2018; Qwabe, Maluleke & Olutola, 2022).

University of Venda, University of Limpopo, and Tshwane University of Technology are the three rural universities in Limpopo Province where this study was carried out. All retired lecturers and former students who graduated from these higher education institutions in 2021, as well as retired government officials from the Department of Higher Education and Training at the same institutions in 2021, made up the study's population. Ten lecturers had retired, and six of them were chosen using purposive sampling if they had retired between January and June. Three government officials from the Department of Higher Education and Training were chosen if they had retired before April 2021 because of ill health and concern about the Covid-19 pandemic, and six former students were chosen if they had graduated in October. 44 people were the whole target population. The research settings and subjects from whom relevant data to comprehend the main phenomenon could be acquired were chosen via purposeful sampling.

Fifteen individuals were chosen for this study using the purposive sample, who were split up as follows: Three retired government officials who worked for the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), six former students from three institutions, and six retired lecturers from the three universities

in Limpopo Province. The following reasons were used for the selection of participants in this study:

- Retired lecturers from universities were selected because they had rich information as they were eyewitnesses to the higher education in their institutions.
- Former students from universities were selected on the basis that they were students in their institutions and they know what happened in their universities
- Retired government officials who worked on the DHET were selected because they were responsible for the funds allocated to higher education.

Data were gathered by conducting literature reviews and semi-structured Key Informant Interviews with people who had rich and informed perspectives on the post-apartheid government's challenges to build sustainable institutions of higher education. The data were then analysed using Thematic Content Analysis, which involved identifying, analysing, and documenting themes in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2013). These platforms were utilised by this study as data sources. To make it easier for the researcher to record the data that was gathered, themes and sub-themes were created.

## **5. Results and Discussion**

The results of this study were presented in clearly demarcated sub-themes covering among others, the inequitable and unjust higher education system, the government's financial capacity, failure to address the demand for free education for all, mismanagement of funds in the university education sector, the post-apartheid government's role in higher education, and intervention by the post-apartheid government in higher education.

### **5.1 The Inequitable and Unjust Higher Education System**

This section responds to the main research question on the challenges faced by the post-apartheid government to build sustainable higher education in South Africa. It emerged from the study that the inequitable and unjust higher education system is still in place. The results demonstrate how the South Africa's apartheid education system harms quality education. To validate the above assertion,

the following participants reported:

*STU1: "We are unable to access equitable education for all because of our level of education. The apartheid education system in South Africa is detrimental to high-quality education". LEC2: "In South Africa, resources for black and rural higher education institutions are getting worse. The Verwoerdian educational system was carried over to our higher education". GOF2: "Discrimination of resources among higher education institutions in South Africa is a regular occurrence. South Africa is known for having a two-tiered economy, with wealthy Whites and impoverished Blacks." STU2: "The unjust and unequal system of higher education prevails."*

The preceding paragraph and quotations indicate that there is inequitable and unjust higher education system. Giliomee (2012) claims that the Verwoerdian education system in South Africa created a class-based disparity between Blacks and Whites based on race. Before there was democracy, segregation and racial hierarchy were advanced by apartheid policies and techniques, which were extremely harmful to the African majority.

### **5.2 The Government's Financial Capacity**

This section responds to the challenges faced by the post-apartheid government to build sustainable higher education in South Africa. The findings showed that the government's financial resources are insufficient. The government help higher education through NSFAS. The majority of participants revealed that South Africa is in an economic catastrophe that is about to blow apart. The views of the participants were encapsulated in the following statements:

*STU3 said: "The government must take into account how to make "free" education sustainable." LEC5 stated: "The government's financial capacity is inadequate. There are not enough financial resources available to the government. STU4 indicated that South Africa is on the verge of catastrophic economic collapse. GOF2 expressed concerns: "South Africa has a limited amount of resources to support its post-apartheid needs and targets."*

The responses above make it quite evident that the government's financial resources are insufficient. Tjønneland (2017) contends that South Africa has a limited amount of resources to support its

post-apartheid needs and targets, such as ensuring that all of its citizens have access to education. Due to the situation of the national economy and general trends in the global economy, the government was hesitant to establish any alternative student funding model to the NSFAS. It appears that the government was sufficiently warned against rash spending because of the economy's long-term decline.

### 5.3 Failure to Address the Demand for Free Education for All

This section responds to the challenges faced by the post-apartheid government to build sustainable higher education in South Africa. The study revealed that university students wanted free education for everyone. The general consensus was that the students' demands for "free" education were long overdue. The majority of participants voiced dismay that the administration did not want to give in to student demands for "free" education, even in light of the grave economic conditions facing the nation. In support of the failure to address the demand for free education for all, the subsequent comments are given as examples of what the participants said:

*GOF2: "There is insufficient financial capacity within the government." LEC5: "No such ambitious funding models involving 'free' education can be provided by the government." STU6: "The sustainability of 'free' education is a matter for government consideration."*

These responses suggest that there was not much support for the demand for universal free education. According to Tjønneland (2017), before adopting "free" education for university education, the government must take sustainability into account. None of these ambitious finance plans incorporating "free" education could be provided by the South African government or its Treasury. According to Wangenge-Ouma (2021), there hasn't been much economic growth in South Africa over the last ten years, and it would remain utopian for the government to get involved in a needless financing frenzy for higher education.

### 5.4 Mismanagement of Funds in the University Education Sector

This section responds to the challenges faced by the post-apartheid government to build the sustainable higher education in South Africa. Participants

believed that there was a lack of political will to address mismanagement and corruption that was taking place in universities. In one case, the student who received money into her account by a mistake by NSFAS administrators and instead used the money was sentenced to five years although she has appealed the sentence. The following participants responded in this way:

*STU4: "To address the mismanagement and corruption occurring in universities and NSFAS, there was a lack of political will." LEC2: "Funding system was abused by students."*

The aforementioned statements indicated that mismanagement of funds in the university education sector occurs. There is a deluge of recent literature (Samuels, 2021; Dyomfana, 2022; Macupe, 2022) that alleges corruption and mishandling of funding at universities. Tensions among higher education's key actors – universities, the state, students, society at large increase. Again, students abused NSFAS its system (Qukula, 2020; Luckhoff & Mbhele, 2022). The abuse of NSFAS has been recorded with incidences involving court cases against students.

### 5.5 The Post-Apartheid Government's Role in Higher Education

This section responds to the role of the post-apartheid government in higher education.

The majority of the participants indicated that the government has played a role in higher education. Again, the results from participants indicated that the post-1994 apartheid government in South Africa has instituted several measures to transform higher education in South Africa. It emerged from the study that the government has ensured equitable access to higher education irrespective of race or socio-economic status and great successes have been achieved in this respect. In support of the above information, the following participants said:

*GOF3 said: "The Bill of Rights of South Africa's Constitution indicates that all South Africans have the right to a basic education, adult basic education, and further education, and the state must take reasonable measures to make it progressively available and accessible to the people."*

It is clear from the aforementioned comments that the post-apartheid government is involved in



higher education. Harber (2013) provides further support for this, stating that under a democratic South Africa, education was given priority for transformation. Admittedly, South Africa boasts one of the highest rates of public education investment in the world; the government has been spending more on education than any other sector, accounting for roughly 7% of GDP and 20% of total state expenditure. Additionally, in order to "achieve the belief that economic development was only possible in the context of a highly skilled workforce and a coordinated policy structure", the government developed a number of higher education measures (Bozalek & Boughey, 2012).

### 5.6 Intervention by the Post-Apartheid Government in Higher Education

This section responds to the intervention strategies the post-apartheid government can employ to build the sustainable higher education in South Africa. The study indicated that curriculum revision should be pushed by the government. The results showed that more government investment and involvement would be made in higher education funding. The results showed that during the Covid-19 outbreak, the post-apartheid government made an effort to assist. The majority of participants agreed that the post-apartheid did its level best. The following remarks are appropriate:

*STU3: "During the Covid-19 pandemic, many students received NSFAS, laptops, and data." LEC1: "The goal should be more government investment and involvement in higher education funding. STU6: "It should be considered to introduce strategies to finance education outside of the NSFAS." STU5: The study found that the government ought to advocate for the revision of educational curricula." LEC2: "The government should increase funding to reduce the strain on higher education institutions."*

The responses above reveal intervention by the post-apartheid government in higher education. Again, the South African government's initiative to buy mobile data for students, laptops, and tablets (Ndlovu, Ndebele & Mlambo, 2022) was a noteworthy example. The study demonstrated the significance of governmental collaboration with academic institutions in South Africa. The government seems to need to fulfil its commitments rather than just pay lip service. To lessen the burden on

institutions of higher learning, the government ought to augment its financial support. Corruption and financial mismanagement need to be tackled, and those responsible should face the heavy hand of the law. According to Alasuutari (2020), closing the digital divide and reducing the widening disparities will be crucial for the future.

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper aimed at investigating the post-apartheid government's challenges to build the sustainable higher education in South African rural universities. To address the research questions, the researcher employed four theoretical frameworks, namely Critical Social theory, Decoloniality Theory, The Classical Theory of Education Crisis and The Autogenous Theory of Education Crisis. Both theories influence curriculum, pedagogy, research, and institutional culture in South Africa's higher education system by addressing themes of decolonization, social justice, equity, and inclusivity. By challenging the presumptions, norms, and values that guide the policies, procedures, and practises of higher education institutions, decoloniality theory also contributes to our understanding of the governance issue in higher education. A more democratic, inclusive, and transformative curriculum that considers the needs, interests, and experiences of society as well as the students is advocated by both critical social theory and decoloniality theory. Due to South Africa's resource constraints, it may not be possible to provide all higher education students with a sustainable education. To lessen the burden on institutions of higher learning, the government ought to augment its financial support. South Africa is faced with limited resource capacity, and providing sustainable education to all higher education students under these circumstances can be unobtainable. The government should increase funding to reduce the strain on higher education institutions. This paper recommends a new approach to improve higher education funding in South Africa. Mismanagement of funds and corruption should be addressed and the culprits should face the mighty hand of law. People elected to be in the government should be competent enough to deal with challenges of the country. All stakeholders should work more closely together than they currently do to put an end to the challenges faced by the post-apartheid government to build the sustainable higher education.

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# Socio-Economic Issues in the South African Business Environment: Reflections of Small Medium Enterprises in Butterworth Amathole District

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**Abstract:** Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) play an important role in economic growth and development as they provide the economy with efficiency, innovation, competition, and employment. Entrepreneurs are responsible for the success of their businesses and must face up with definite challenges/obstacles in doing so. The study aimed to examine the effect of socio-economic issues in the South African business environment in the Butterworth Amathole district. Based on a purposive sample, qualitative data were collected from eight entrepreneurs using semi-structured face-to-face interviews. A thematic approach was used to analyse data. The study findings revealed that lack of education and Skills, high rate of unemployment, Covid-19 implications, Lack of government support and crime have contributed negatively to the South African business environment and to the success of Small Medium Enterprise businesses in the area where the study was conducted. The study recommended that, there is a need for the provision of ample opportunities to develop skills for business enhancement and it was suggested as a way forward. Government should support the growth of SMEs, which can contribute significantly to employment and economic growth. Provide access to funding, mentorship, and market opportunities to help these businesses thrive.

**Keywords:** Small Medium Enterprises, Socio-economic issues, Business Environment

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## 1. Introduction

In the South African business environment, there exist pervasive socio-economic issues that significantly impact the functioning and sustainability of businesses. These challenges are multi-faceted, encompassing various aspects of society and the economy, and they create substantial hurdles for businesses operating in the country. Small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) are essential to economic growth since they created the majority of jobs and increased output in both developed and developing nations (Ramukumba, 2014). SMEs increase income distribution, generate new jobs, lower poverty rates, and promote export growth, their functions are especially important in emerging nations. According to Love and Roper (2013), SMEs promote the growth of industry, entrepreneurship, and the rural economy. The relationship between rapid economic growth, social and economic advancement and the decrease of poverty is not limited to this. Research indicates a strong correlation between SME development and a nation's economic growth. For instance, Mahmood (2008) observed that there is a strong, positive correlation between economic growth and the proportionate size of the

SME sector. Bouri (2011) reported that SMEs make up a significant portion of the economy roughly 50% of GDP on average and have a significant impact on the economy. It's also critical to remember that the expansion of the SME sector alone generates many new jobs (Ardic, Mylenko & Saltane, 2011). SMEs are generally underrepresented in international trade, despite the fact that their roles in respective national economies are growing dramatically. As a result, steps must be done to increase their market in the business industry (Bassanini & Duval, 2007).

SME development and improvement is essential to the growth and development of the local economy (Ramukumba, 2014). Small and Medium Enterprise businesses are an important indicator that is crucial for the expansion and development of the economy. SMEs significantly aid in the creation of jobs and the delivery of affordable goods and services (Bushe, 2019). Their long-term plans are to help the nation achieve its macroeconomic goals, like reducing unemployment and boosting apprenticeship training. Socio-economic challenges have a significant impact on the growth and sustainability of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) operating in the South African business environment. SMEs



make a substantial contribution to the economic growth, social upliftment, and political stability of every nation. They come in a variety of forms. They can be set up for any type of commercial activity in both urban and rural regions, like informal businesses such as local farmers, local restaurants, barber shops and boutiques retail stores.

In Malaysia, a study by Muhammad (2010) revealed that the main issues faced by SMEs in the business industry was the lack of knowledge regarding marketing techniques, branding, customer loyalty, as well as the lack of good contacts with other local and international enterprises. It made it difficult for them to succeed in the business industry. According to Saleh & Manjunath (2020), poor infrastructure like bad local roads, transportation and bad broadband in India was one of the biggest obstacles for small businesses, as a result, it had a negative impact in the productivity and profitability of small and medium-sized businesses. Saleh & Manjunath (2020) avers that all facets of society, including small companies are being negatively impacted by the destructive conflict, like community protest which is also harming the infrastructure and economy. The authors further avers that while 60% of firms experience customer decline and 97% of businesses experience revenue loss, the service sector was more affected by client base loss (ILO, 2018), which caused some businesses to close. In Japan, people and businesses have been discovered to be victims of theft, crimes, and disorder in association with the conflict events that started in 2014 because of the lawlessness status brought on by the precarious political scenario (Morgan, 2012).

The business industry has seen rapid advancements in technology. Household ownership of mobile phones, smartphones, and tablet computers has increased significantly in recent years. As a result, the personal e-commerce market is expanding as more customers begin to prefer making purchases online rather than offline. However, SMEs haven't been able to completely realize their potential. Finscope (2010) estimates that there are 5.6 million small firms in South Africa that are part of the SME sector. These enterprises generate 11.6 million employment possibilities overall, or six million jobs when the owners of small businesses themselves are excluded. For a variety of reasons, South Africa's micro and small enterprises are not expanding at the rate needed to provide more jobs. For SMEs to reach their full potential, the industry must be

viewed from a new angle that is sensitive to the difficulties it faces. The emphasis must move from the business's accessible collateral to the feasibility of the venture and the entrepreneur's abilities. Every company needs finances that are specific to their own set of problems. Further, it is imperative that the business owner should be competent in managing the business and be knowledgeable of current industry needs. This will ensure success in their business. Addressing these socio-economic issues requires a concerted effort from the government, businesses, and civil society. South African government must create a more inclusive, stable, and conducive business environment, fostering economic growth and social development in the country. Information technology has made the world a small, interconnected village (Lose, Tengeh, Mazirir & Madinga, 2016). This has presented problems as a result SMEs in South Africa, have difficulty in generating profit, which hinders their growth. Unemployment and poverty are the two most urgent issues that SMEs in South African business environments must deal with (Selepe, 2019; Bouazza, Ardjouman & Abada, 2015). A shortage of business support, technical training, management training, credit working capital, markets from which to operate, and start-up capital are among the issues SMEs encounter, according to Mukata and Swanepoel (2015).

A report by the Department of Trade and Industry (2023), states that SMEs in South Africa face several challenges. The most important of which have been reported by several organisations to be a lack of education and management skills, finance and obtaining credit, access to market and developing relations with customers and lack of government support, which then makes it impossible for SMEs to succeed in the business industry. The most unfortunate part is that the South African government is not creating an environment that is conducive for small businesses to create jobs (Adisa, Abdulraheem & Mordi, 2014). The authors further noted that the South African government should strengthen the service offerings of its development finance agencies to make sure that they provide seminars, workshops, and training for small business owners on how to run a successful small business.

Khambule (2020) posits that, the global economy came to a standstill due to the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns, leading to significant economic downturns. The author argues that these

critical disruptions caused by Covid-19 are expected to erase the progress made in addressing developmental challenges in developing nations and pose challenges in achieving sustainable development goals. Businesses had to close to comply with Covid-19 protocols, which had a detrimental impact on them as they were unable to generate income or profits, thereby affecting their contribution to a country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Governments should have provided financial aid to small businesses in the form of grants, loans, and subsidies. These funds were aimed at helping businesses cover operational costs, retain employees, and prevent closures. With the shift towards online operations, governments provided support for small businesses to establish or enhance their online presence. This included training programs, workshops, and grants for digital marketing and e-commerce initiatives. Against this background, the study seeks to investigate the effect of socio-economic issues in the South African business environment through the reflections of Small and Medium Enterprises in the Butterworth Amathole district in the Eastern Cape. A research question to be answered in this study is: What are the socio-economic issues facing the Small and Medium Enterprises in the Butterworth Amathole district in the Eastern Cape?

## 2. Theoretical Framework

The paper was grounded within the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory which then focuses on the internal resources of a firm as a source of competitive advantage. Advocates of the resource-based view theory assert that a company's competitive advantage is derived from the resources and capabilities it possesses internally. In this perspective, the resources owned and controlled by the organization are the primary drivers of its competitive edge. However, some scholars have broadened this view to include resources that extend beyond the organization's boundaries, a concept known as the 'extended resource-based view'. Scholars like Das and Teng (2000) and Matthews (2003) have explored this extended view to understand how firms can attain and maintain competitive advantage. According to proponents of the extended resource-based view, such as Dyer and Singh (1998), organizations can create unique competitive advantages by combining resources in distinctive ways across organizational boundaries. This involves skilfully managing relationships with external entities such as suppliers, customers, government agencies, and universities.

By effectively leveraging these external relationships, firms can develop valuable resources that contribute significantly to their competitive advantage. Hence, a company can achieve and maintain a competitive advantage by strategically accessing its essential resources that extend beyond its organizational boundaries. Studies indicate that there are opportunities for enhancing productivity along the value chain when organizations are willing to invest in relationships specific to those contexts and creatively combine resources. This concept, as proposed by Dyer (1996), suggests that organizations capable of making investments tailored to specific relationships can effectively blend resources in distinctive manners. As a result, they can generate unique benefits from these relationships, known as relational rents, giving them a competitive edge over organizations lacking this ability. For SMEs in Butterworth, leveraging unique local knowledge, cultural capital, or natural resources could provide a competitive edge. However, the challenge lies in adequately developing and protecting these resources.

## 3. Methods and Material

This section describes the research methods and strategies utilized to gather data for the issue under investigation, adhering to Maree's (2007) recommendations. The information obtained from participants' responses has been thoroughly scrutinized, collected, and analysed through well-defined research protocols. To meet the objectives of this paper, a qualitative approach, as recommended by Myers (2020), was employed. This approach enabled direct interaction with the target audience, involving interactions with owners and managers of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) offering goods and services in the Amathole-East Butterworth region of Eastern Cape. The focus of this inquiry was on promoting a deeper self-understanding by exploring insights into human conditions, lived experiences, and behaviours.

### 3.1 Research Design and Participants

This paper adopted a qualitative case study research design. Sutton and Austin (2015) highlight that case studies are widely recognized in research for providing tools that facilitate the exploration of complex phenomena within their natural environments. Therefore, comprehending the context in which these approaches took place is crucial. Without this understanding, it would have been challenging to

identify the real challenges experienced by Small and Medium Enterprises. The study aims to investigate the effects of socio-economic issues on the Small and Medium Enterprises in Butterworth Amathole district (the case in the study) from the participants' perspectives. The sample for the study comprised ten owners/managers of small medium enterprises who were purposively selected from entrepreneurs/managers of businesses who were offering services such as (Local restaurants, Barber shops, financial services, Boutiques, and Local farmers in Butterworth Amathole district in Eastern Cape. A purposive sample offers the researcher participants who are specifically chosen because they have the relevant information needed to address the research objective (Kumar, 2011).

### 3.2 Instruments

Semi-structured face-to-face interviews with ten owners/managers of small- to medium-sized businesses in the Butterworth Amathole district were used to generate data for the study. The researcher was able to "gather information from key informants who have personal experiences, attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs related to the topic of interest", which is why this approach was chosen (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). To maintain the data's credibility and reliability, a triangulation approach was used, involving data gathered from various participants. Additionally, transcriptions from a subset of informants were coded to confirm the accuracy and appropriateness of the identified themes.

### 3.3 Data Analysis

The information obtained from the semi-structured interviews underwent analysis employing a thematic method as outlined by Clarke and Braun (2013). Following the approach described by Nowell and colleagues (2017), the data analysis process involved familiarizing oneself with the data, developing initial codes, identifying themes, assessing these themes, defining and labelling them, and ultimately compiling the findings. The data collected from the interviews with managers of small and medium-sized businesses was subjected to these systematic analytical procedures.

## 4. Ethical Considerations

Maree (2019) contends that researchers have an ethical duty to be conscious of the legal restrictions

that come with the fathering and reporting of information in order to preserve the rights and welfare of study participants. All subjects who took part in the study provided their informed consent before getting started. This indicates that they were informed of every detail of the study, including its goals, methods, and any potential drawbacks or advantages. Additionally, they have the option to inquire and leave the study at any moment. All these actions are necessary to safeguard the rights of participants and guarantee that the research is carried out ethically. Most crucially, the study preserved and accurately reflected their identities throughout. Most importantly, their identities were protected throughout the study and represented with codes during the data analysis. That is, the participant was represented with P1, P2, P3, ...P8.

## 5. Results and Discussion

Emanating from the analysis of the data, four themes emerged indicative of a range of socio-economic factors faced by small and medium sized businesses in the Amathole district. These are Unemployment, Crime, Covid-19 implications, and Lack of Education. Following is the presentation and discussion of the findings as per the response of the participants that took part in this study.

### 5.1 Unemployment

Participants have valuable insights into the effects of unemployment on Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Here are some potential responses from the participants when they were asked about the effects of unemployment on their businesses:

*P1 "Unemployment has led to decreased consumer spending, as people have less disposable income, which had resulted in a smaller customer base for SMEs, leading to lower sales and revenue".*

*P3 "As many people are unemployed, some decide to start their own businesses or freelance, which then led to increased competition for SMEs, making it harder to attract customers".*

The study findings revealed that unemployment is affecting Small and Medium Sized businesses as it decreases consumer spending because people have less disposable income which then resulted in a smaller customer base. This finding is consistent with the study findings of Selepe (2019) and Bouazza,

Ardjouman & Abada (2015), who indicated that unemployment and poverty are the two most urgent issues that SMEs in South African business environments must deal with, as they result to lower sales and revenue for SMEs. Unemployment has increased competition as many people decided to start-up their businesses and it affected SMEs negatively as it was difficult to others to attract customers in the market due to identical products they are offering.

## 5.2 Crime

When exploring the effects of crime as a socio-economic factor on Small and Medium Enterprises, participants shared various responses based on their experiences and observations. Crime can have a significant effect on SMEs, affecting their operations, finances, and overall well-being. Here are some potential responses from the participants:

*P2 "I am experiencing financial losses caused by crime such as theft and fraud. These losses include stolen inventory, damaged property, and the costs of repairing or replacing stolen items".*

*P4 "Crime has disrupted regular business operations because I had to close and deal with incidents like break-ins or vandalism which requires time and effort that could otherwise be spent on growing the business".*

The above rhetoric by the respondents is in sharp contrast with the works of Ramukumba (2014) who reported that people and businesses have been discovered to be victims of theft, crimes, and disorder in association with the conflict events that started in 2014 because of the lawlessness status brought on by the precarious political scenario in Japan. This makes it difficult to SMEs to grow and contribute to the country's economic growth and development as some SMEs might see their insurance premiums rise after experiencing crime-related losses. This added cost further affects their financial stability. Crime has also affected SMEs business operations because they had to close and deal with incidents of crime like break-ins and vandalism which required time and effort that could have been used by the owners on finding ways that they can use to grow their businesses.

## 5.3 Covid-19 Implications

When participants were asked about the effect of Covid-19 on Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

highlighted a range of responses. Their responses have covered challenges they encountered during the pandemic. Here are some responses from the participants:

*P5 "I had experienced and faced reduced revenue and cash flow disruptions due to lockdown and decreased consumer spending. I had to seek financial assistance to stay afloat from banks".*

*P8 "I had to navigate changing regulations and compliance requirements. I had to also find ways to maintain operations during the lockdown".*

*"We had to close our businesses as we were forced to follow the Covid-19 regulations, it then affected us negatively because we were not making any income".*

These findings are in line with the study findings of Khambule (2020) posits that the global economy came to a standstill due to the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns, leading to significant economic downturns. The author argues that these critical disruptions caused by Covid-19 are expected to erase the progress made in addressing developmental challenges in developing nations and pose challenges in achieving sustainable development goals. Businesses had to shut down in observing Covid-19 protocols, which then affected them negatively as they were not getting any income/making any profit so that they contribute to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of a country.

## 5.4 Lack of Education and Skills

Participants have valuable insights into the effects of lack of education on Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Here are some potential responses from the participants when they were asked about the effects of lack of education and skills on their businesses.

*P6 "People with lower levels of education and skills often face limited job opportunities and are more likely to be employed in low-paying, unstable, or informal jobs. This perpetuates a cycle of poverty, as individuals struggle to meet basic needs and improve their economic well-being".*

*P7 "People in this district are illiterate as a result they find it difficult to find employment so that they can be able to meet their basic needs and contribute to economic growth of a country".*



Absolutely, the cycle of limited education, low skills, and restricted job opportunities can indeed lead to a perpetuation of poverty and economic hardship. This situation is often referred to as the "cycle of poverty," where various interconnected factors reinforce each other and create significant barriers for individuals to break free from poverty. Congruent to that, the Department of Trade and Industry indicated that SMEs in South Africa face a number of challenges, the most important of which have been reported a shortage of educational and managerial expertise, financial constraints and difficulty in securing credit, limited access to markets and challenges in building customer relationships, along with insufficient government support, contribute to the difficulties faced by numerous organizations which then makes it impossible for SMEs to succeed in the business industry, which then makes it impossible for SMEs to succeed in the business industry.

### 5.5 Lack of Government Support

When exploring the effects of the lack of government as a socio-economic factor on Small and Medium Enterprises, participants shared various responses based on their experiences and observations below:

*P4 "As Small Medium Enterprises we lack government support which can encourage business growth, leading to job creation and reduced unemployment rate. Without adequate support, businesses might face difficulties in hiring, training, and retaining skilled workers, contributing to higher unemployment rates and social instability".*

The study findings revealed that Small Medium Enterprises lacks government support for their success in the business industry which can encourage business growth, leading to job creation and reduced unemployment rates. A report by the Department of Trade and Industry (2023), states that SMEs in South Africa have limited access to market and developing relations with customers and lack of government support, which then makes it impossible for SMEs to succeed in the business industry. Government support plays a pivotal role in shaping the business landscape and driving economic development. The lack of such support can lead to various socio-economic issues, hindering innovation, growth, job creation, and overall prosperity. Therefore, a balanced and supportive partnership

between the government and businesses is crucial for achieving sustainable economic progress.

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, the socio-economic issues in the South African business environment require a concerted effort from all stakeholders. By addressing these challenges with a holistic approach, South Africa can unlock its full potential for inclusive economic growth, improved social well-being, and a thriving business environment. There is a need to establish partnerships between businesses and educational institutions to design training programs that align with industry needs. This will enhance employability and reduce the skills mismatch. Government should support the growth of SMEs, which can contribute significantly to employment and economic growth. Provide access to funding, mentorship, and market opportunities to help these businesses thrive. Creation of a skills program that would help SMEs address two of their problems, including "a lack of management skills" and "developing relationships with customers". Gaining new skills increases affectivity and productivity which, in turn, makes an organization more stable and profitable. Establish partnership with foreign international business owners to benchmark same business practices. This will enhance employability and reduce the skills mismatch. Invest in infrastructure development, including reliable energy and transportation systems, to support business operations and economic growth. Advocate for the implementation of robust social safety nets to provide a basic level of support for vulnerable populations, helping to alleviate poverty and inequality. Encourage businesses to engage in meaningful CSR initiatives that address local socio-economic challenges. These initiatives can have a positive impact on communities and contribute to a more positive business reputation.

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# Development of a Model to Facilitate Effective Implementation of Changes to the HIV Program Guidelines by Healthcare Workers in the Public Healthcare Settings, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

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**Abstract:** *Background:* HIV evolves at a high speed, so as clinical management forces rapid changes to the implementation of priority programs like the Elimination of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV (EMTCT) program. Models that can facilitate management and effective implementation of rapid changes are needed by healthcare workers in an ever-evolving HIV/AIDS epidemic. *Objectives:* To describe the process that was followed in the development and description of a model to facilitate effective implementation of changes to the EMTCT program for healthcare workers in the public healthcare settings. *Methods:* A qualitative exploratory descriptive study design was used to develop a model. Concepts were derived from the experiences of healthcare workers in the implementation of changes for the EMTCT program in selected public health facilities, based on the Chinn and Kramer model classification as well as the Dickoff survey list. Both inductive and deductive strategies were used to make sense of the collected data. *Results:* The central concept was identified and the facilitation of effective implementation of changes was described. Six main concepts made up the model: planning for change; collaboration with communities; resource requirements; support needs; environment in the health care setting; as well as effective communication. The implementation takes place within the process, following a sequence of activities that includes change management, leadership buy-in; data system monitoring as well as sustainability. *Conclusion:* The model described the process followed in the development of the model for use by health care workers to facilitate effective implementation of rapid changes to the EMTCT program considering multiple contexts for contribution towards elimination of children new HIV infections.

**Keywords:** Model, Program changes, Effective implementation, Elimination of mother to child transmission of HIV

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## 1. Introduction

Poor Implementation of health programs had been highlighted in previous studies as a challenge in ensuring that health care workers practice proven interventions (Goggin, 1990; Aizire, Fowler & Coovadia, 2013; Barker, Barron, Bhardwaj & Pillay, 2015; Bertram, Blasé & Fixsen, 2015). South Africa is one of Sub Saharan countries which considers EMTCT as a public health priority prevention program for ensuring that children are prevented from transmitting HIV virus from their mothers (NDOH, 2008; NDOH, 2012; SANAC, 2012; Barron, Pillay,

Doherty, Sherman, Jackson, Bhardwaj, Robinson & Goga, 2013; NDOH, 2013; NDOH, 2015) aiming at eliminating mother to child transmission of HIV(MTCT).

Whilst previous studies had reported challenges to implementation of EMTCT health program, significant progress has been made, however policy and guidelines for this program changes rapidly due to the evolving HIV/AIDS epidemic. To be able to reduce HIV new infections in children, all proven interventions should be implemented with success. South Africa is striving towards reaching

the universal target of elimination of mother to child transmission of HIV (MTCT) as per UNAIDS and WHO targets towards ending HIV epidemic by 2030 (UNAIDS, 2011; HIV/AIDS, 2014; UNAIDS, 2015; Sidibé, Loures & Samb, 2016).

South Africa is committed to attaining the UNAIDS 95-95-95 ambitious targets (HIV/AIDS 2014) to control the HIV epidemic by providing quality healthcare services using highly effective antiretroviral treatment (ART). The principal goal of ART is to attain and maintain viral suppression, which will prevent new HIV infections, increase life expectancy, decrease morbidity and mortality as well as improve the quality of lives of all South Africans, thus contributing to realising the vision of A LONG AND HEALTHY LIFE FOR ALL.

A model intended for healthcare workers is needed to facilitate the implementation of rapid changes to programs using a program as a demonstration. This article describes the development of a model for the effective implementation of changes for the EMTCT program to support healthcare workers in SA striving to attain virtual elimination of MTCT.

### 1.1 Research Question

What is the model that can facilitate implementation of the health program in highly HIV epidemic public health care settings.

### 1.2 Aim of the Study

To develop and describe a model to facilitate implementation of the health program in highly HIV epidemic public health care settings.

### 1.3 Objectives for the Study

1. To derive from the experiences of health care workers' findings the main concepts to utilize in the model.
2. To define and classify the main concepts identified.
3. To construct the interrelationship statements among concepts.
4. To describe the structure and process of the proposed model.

## 2. Literature Review

In searching this literature, the researchers used MEDIBASE; Pub-med; Sabinet and references of included studies. Search engines also included google scholar and University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) electronic theses. The challenges in HIV program implementation had been widely reported in South Africa as needing urgent attention to be addressed for a country to virtually eliminate MTCT (Haines, 2004; Horwood, Haskins, Vermaak, Phakathi, Subbaye & Doherty, 2010; Aizire et al., 2013; Gourlay, Birdthistle, Mburu, Iorpenda & Wringe, 2013; Ezeanolue, Powell, Patel, Olutola, Obiefune, Dakum, Okonkwo, Gobir, Akinmurele & Nwandu, 2016). The experiences of health care workers in the implementation of changes to the EMTCT program need to be understood as well as the realities at the implementation level, so as to meet targets for zero new HIV infections in children in the fight against the global HIV epidemic (UNAIDS, 2014). There is a paucity of studies in this context that reports on experiences of key stakeholders involved in the implementation of rapid changes to the EMTCT program. Efforts made thus far to end preventable deaths have been hampered by the paucity of models for health care workers in resource constrained public health care settings to facilitate implementation of changes to priority health programs like EMTCT.

The South African government has committed to end the scourge of HIV/AIDS particularly HIV new infections in children to achieve elimination in a highly burdened country severely affected by HIV, more so in pregnancy (NDOH, 2011; NDOH, 2012; NDOH, 2015). The country had been identified as having a high implementation capacity compared to other countries in the region (NDOH, 2015). The commitments resulted in changes in program policies and guidelines which require that implementation of the changes to have impact on the program meant to save lives.

The 2019 guidelines (NDOH, 2019) have been revised in the new 2023 ART guidelines to include more optimized treatment regimens for all clients, including pregnant and breastfeeding women and children to be able to eliminate transmission of HIV. The South Africa's National Health Council (NHC) has adopted the new World Health Organization (WHO) recommended first, second and third-line regimens that include Dolutegravir (DTG) as the preferred antiretroviral drug.



For a country to virtually eliminate MTCT, health-care workers should be up to speed and effectively implement rapid changes for the EMTCT program to be able to save lives (Barron et al., 2013). Whilst vast majority of studies reported on the implementation of EMTCT through assessing cascaded for the program and performance of indicators (Geddes, Knight, Reid, Giddy, Esterhuizen & Roberts, 2008; Doherty, Chopra, Nsibandé & Mngoma, 2009; Barron et al., 2013; Chabikuli, Gwarzo, Olufunso, Reidpath, Allotey, Ibrahim & Hamelmann, 2013; Mate, Ngidi, Reddy, Mphatswe, Rollins & Barker, 2013; Ngidi, Reddy, Luvuno, Rollins, Baker & Mate, 2013; Ibetu, Giddy & Cox, 2014; Bhardwaj, Carter, Aarons & Chi, 2015), as well as health service delivery models that reported on EMTCT program indicator performance (Doherty, Chopra, Nsibandé & Mngoma, 2009; Tsague, Tsiouris, Carter, Mugisha, Tene, Nyankesha, Koblavi-Deme, Mugwaneza, Kayirangwa & Sahabo, 2010; Youngleson, Nkurunziza, Jennings, Arendse, Mate & Barker, 2010; Mate et al., 2013), paucity of studies that offered models that considered experiences of key stakeholders involved in implementation of program changes in their contexts, to assist in effective implementation.

### **3. Theoretical and Conceptual Background**

The theoretical underpinning for this study was Organizational Readiness theory. This theory believed that organizations must be assessed for their readiness for change (Weiner, 2009). The change management, leadership, contexts, motivation and capacity were seen as a precursor for successful implementation of change. This theory was used in this study to understand health care facility readiness for introduced change. Organizational readiness for change is seen as a function of how much organizational members value the change and how favorably they appraise three key determinants of implementation capability: task demands, resource availability, and situational factors. For Weiner (2009) when organizational readiness for change is high, organizational members are more likely to initiate change, exert greater effort, exhibit greater persistence, and display more cooperative behavior. The result can lead to more effective implementation of the change.

In this study, organizational readiness theory is seen as best suited for examining health care facility (organization) and their readiness for change,

since collective behavior change is seen as necessary in order to effectively implement the required change, for it to produce anticipated outcomes. Whilst change within an organization is seen as a complicated process demanding a lot of effort, the role of leaders is seen as crucial in managing the process of change.

### **4. Research Methodology for Model Development**

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) described qualitative research as focusing on lived experience and the meanings which people give to their experiences. This was a qualitative approach to develop a model informed by key stakeholders experiences and perceptions.

Qualitative Exploratory descriptive design assisted in providing with description of what the stakeholders perceive, as they tell their own lived experiences (Creswell, 2003), that which is not influenced by the researcher. The study used the experiences as reported to identify concepts to assist in the development of the model to support implementation of program changes. The study used Chinn and Kramer process for model development (Chinn & Kramer, 2008; 2011). The steps included: 1) concept analysis, 2) relationship statements, and 3) description of the model.

The purposively selected key stakeholders (health care workers, the district program coordinators, the community care givers who met the inclusion criteria as well as patients) provided with constructs to develop the model. Data collection used various data sources to triangulate findings, including the focus group interviews, interviews as well as semi structured questionnaires. Collected research data was then utilized to construct the model, which is based on human interactions and the experiences of stakeholders involved in the phenomena of interest (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000)

#### **4.1 Data Analysis**

The purpose of data analysis was to describe the lived experiences of stakeholders involved in implementation of program changes in their setting. Verbatim transcription of qualitative data collected was made. Thematic analysis guided by Milles and Huberman (1984) data analysis technique, allowed making sense of collected transcripts, trying to

discover the meaning through reading and re-reading of transcripts.

## 5. Findings

### 5.1 Model Development Process

Model development process in this study followed the process described by Chinn & Kramer (1991; 2008; 2011) and Dickoff, James & Wiedenbach (1968).

#### 5.1.1 Overview of the Model

Phase 1 is shown in Table 1 on the next page, which provides an overview of the model according to Chinn and Kramer (2011), explaining six steps to systematically order the concepts and its related concepts.

Phase 2 explains the classification and definitions of concepts.

##### 5.1.1.1 Classification of the Main Concepts for Model Structure

For Dickoff et al. (1968) it was crucial to establish relations within concepts, therefore a survey list was used to construct the relationships within concepts. This provided with ability to use six different ways to look at similar thing.

##### 5.1.1.2 Definitions of Central and Main Concepts with its Relationship Statements

The identified concepts are defined below. The definitions were contextualized for this study according to department of health definition (Subject definition) as well as Oxford dictionary definition to provide meaning for the model for health care workers in public health care setting.

#### 5.1.2 Structure of the Model

The purpose of structure for Chinn and Kramer (1991) is that structure (Figure 1) gives form to the conceptual relationships within it which assist in shaping experiences and perceptions that depict reality. This model structure is based on the six main concepts relationships and depicted according to the main concepts to provide with meaning and provide with interrelations within main concepts. A model for health care workers for effective implementation of changes to EMTCT program model in the public health care settings structure is presented below.

## 6. Discussion and Process Description of the Model (Concepts, Definitions, Relations)

The six main concepts and related concepts are presented in the schematic representation of the model in Figure 1. The main concepts are numbers in letters from a to f, which depict a total of 6 main concepts. Central concept appears on both lateral sides of the model (effective implementation of changes). The circles represent change implementation framework. The contents in the circles represent all that occur during effective implementation of changes for EMTCT program by health care workers within public health care settings. Further description of model structure is discussed below.

### 6.1 Planning for Change

This main concept has related concepts: Leadership commitment, Change management, Preparedness of HCW, Vision, Implementation plan with timelines, Resources availability. The related concepts are seen as preparing and supportive to the health care worker as they enable management of change in their local health care setting for effective implementation of EMTCT program. According to Berwick (2003), leaders enable change and provide direction on how to lead change by drafting implementation plan that considers resources and context that have realistic timeframes. For Bertram et al. (2015), leaders are drivers for change throughout implementation process. Grol & Wensing (2004) emphasise clarity of change re-enforcement by leaders and on drivers for change to become vital for change to impact. Scott in the study of creating change culture (Scott, Mannion, Davies & Marshall, 2003), identified diversity across organizations in how leadership is provided.

### 6.2 Collaboration Between Health Care Workers and Communities

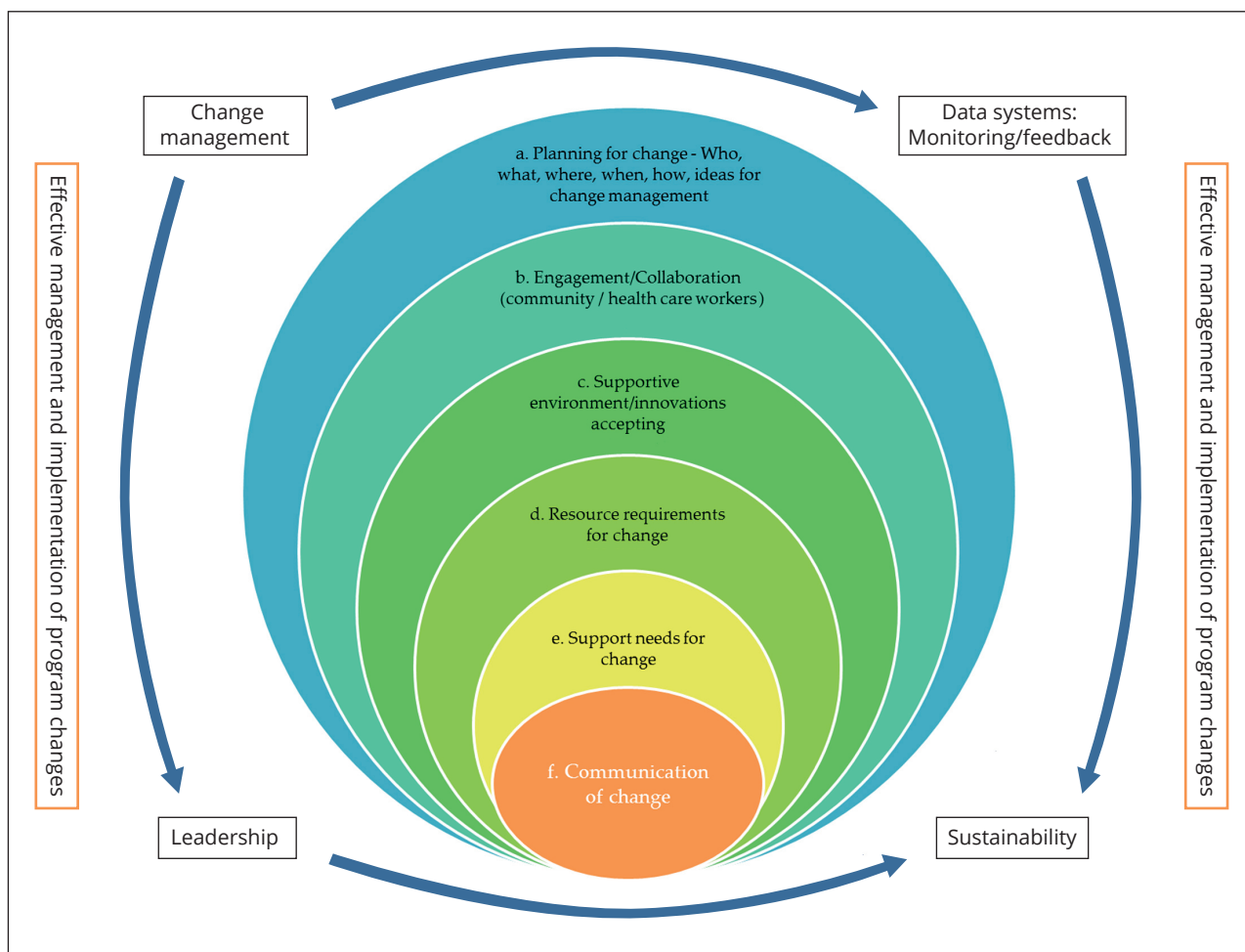
This main concept has related concepts: Engagement with communities, Awareness meetings, Multi-disciplinary team. This main concept signifies the engagement required by the HCW in their management and implementation of change in their setting. In KZN, the Primary Health Care (PHC) model promotes prevention and health promotion (Barron, 2010). This requires that community structures are made aware and form part of health system in the health facilities which contributes to effective management

**Table 1: Process of Identification and Classification of Concepts and Main Concepts**

<b>Model For Health Care Workers</b>	<b>Conclusion Statements Based on Identified Themes</b>	<b>Concepts</b>	<b>Main Concepts</b>
Prepare for change	Health care workers experienced lack of proper planning ahead of change. The support and engagement by leaders with vision have influence on the implementation of changes. This experience was also influenced by knowing ahead of implementation to allow time for 'grasping information' as felt by HCW.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Awareness on the change</li> <li>Build Will</li> <li>Vision (what, where, when, where, how, why)</li> <li>Preparation for change</li> <li>Change agents / champion activities to be performed</li> </ul>	<b>Planning for change</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leadership commitment</li> <li>Change management</li> <li>Preparedness of HCW</li> <li>Vision for change</li> <li>Implementation plan with timelines</li> <li>Resources availability</li> </ul>
Engagement with stakeholders	The HCW perceived communities as playing crucial role in the implementation of program changes. The late communication of changes affects engagement of various stakeholders. HCW perceive collaborative meetings as the driving force for change to be effectively implemented.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community support</li> <li>Community awareness</li> <li>Involvement of multi-disciplinary team of stakeholders</li> <li>Communication of change</li> <li>Will by communities</li> </ul>	<b>Collaboration between HCW and communities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engagement meetings</li> <li>Awareness meetings</li> <li>Multidisciplinary team</li> </ul>
The resources support	HCW experiences too many activities from various programs required to be implemented. Perceived experience by patients and HCW included resources human resources is needed to be able to practice and patients to benefit. The resources, capacity of staff to build knowledge were seen as contributing to effective implementation of change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workload, shortage of staff, materials, equipment,</li> </ul>	<b>Resource requirements to effect implementation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Availability of staff</li> <li>IEC materials</li> <li>Tools to effect implementation</li> </ul>
Human development	The lack of management of change skills by both management and health care workers was perceived as impacting on change implementation affecting patients. HCW skills and knowledge of implemented change was vital. HCW experienced lack of support and mentorship resulted in lack of confidence and uncertainty on activities of introduced change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capacity development (trainings, workshops, in-service educations)</li> <li>Space, infrastructure, materials</li> <li>Self -awareness</li> </ul>	<b>Support needs for change</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Skill,</li> <li>Knowledge of HCW</li> <li>Self-Confidence</li> <li>On-site support and</li> <li>Mentorship</li> </ul>
Contextual support needs	The settings where the change is implemented was experienced impacted on implementation of change, however variations across settings. The variation is seen as either conducive or as inhibit the change implementation. Leadership within health facilities were perceived as creating a conducive environment for change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conducive environment</li> <li>Multidisciplinary team of HCW</li> <li>Staff engagement</li> <li>Space to do activities</li> <li>Structured program</li> <li>Attitude</li> <li>Self-motivated HCW</li> </ul>	<b>Environment of health care facility</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive work environment</li> <li>Leadership support and engagement</li> <li>Supportive of innovations, ideas for change</li> </ul>
Communication strategy	HCW experience lack of communication strategy or plan ahead of implementation due to short space of time available to communicate changes to the program. Awareness to communities, patients and HCW ahead of implementation highlighted as key factor to change implementation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Constructive communication</li> <li>Timely communication</li> <li>Material used to communicate</li> </ul>	<b>Effective communication of change</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engagement with patients</li> <li>Health care worker involvement</li> <li>Feedback</li> </ul>

Source: Authors

**Figure 1: A Model to Facilitate Effective Implementation of Changes to EMTCT Program by Health Care Workers in Public Health Care Settings**



Source: Authors

and implementation of changes for EMTCT program (Kemper, Blumenthal, Corrigan, Cunningham, Felt, Grossman, Kohn, Metcalf, St. Peter & Strouse, 1996). This was suggesting that HCW may not succeed if communities are not part of health system. A study by Mitchell (Kemper et al., 1996; Mitchell & Shortell, 2000) demonstrated the ability of communities involvement in the achievement of significant change.

### 6.3 Supportive Environment of Health Care Facility

Included related concepts: Positive work environment, Leadership support and engagement, Supportive of innovations, ideas for change.

Settings can either support or inhibit successful implementation. For HCW to effectively implement

changes for the program, positive and supportive work environment remains crucial. Leadership support to HCW allow for HCW to innovate and develop ideas locally that may positively effect change implementation. Betty Neumann system model (Neuman & Fawcett, 2002) demonstrated how health care system can assist to adjust to the environment. Several other studies stressed the importance of contexts consideration to enable change for impact (Kitson, Harvey & McCormack, 1998; Berwick 2003; Grol & Wensing, 2004).

### 6.4 Resource Requirements for Change

The related concepts included; Availability of staff, IEC materials, Tools to effect change implementation.

The resources needed for one to implement changes include materials needed for implementation, the



staff available to do activities, and the finances needed to carry the tasks. This also includes developing capacity for HCW to acquire skills and knowledge needed for the program. These resources are also reliant on the context and whether proper implementation plan is in place for effective allocation for impact. The absence resources may negatively impact on the health service delivery to be rendered to the patient. A study by Grol & Wensing (2004), Haines (2004), Grimshaw, Eccles, Lavis, Hill & Squires (2012) and Ezeanolue et al. (2016) sees resource management and availability as inhibiting to implementation.

### **6.5 Support Needs for Change**

Related concepts included the Skill, Knowledge of HCW, Self-Confidence, On-site support and Mentorship.

HCW as driver for change remain significant in effecting change implementation. With limited support and mentorship, self-confidence to independently function get affected, their skill and knowledge can be compromised. As stated in previous studies (Kitson et al., 1998; Michie & Williams, 2003; Haines, 2004; Rowe, de Savigny, Lanata & Victora, 2005), increased support, and feedback system to HCW coupled with mentorship contribute to change implementation.

### **6.6 Effective Communication of Change**

Related concepts included: Engagement with patients, Health care worker involvement, Feedback.

This main concept signifies the interrelations between HCW and patients in the provision of health service delivery for EMTCT program. This implies that this is a two-way process as opposed to one way. The communication required both the HCW and patient. Peplau's theory of interpersonal relations (Peplau, 1997) demonstrated the power of interaction between patient and a nurse (nurse-client relations). Communication within HCW internally within health facilities is seen as key factor in improving change implementation (Kitchen & Daly, 2002). The four squares appearing in the four corners; change management; data systems (monitoring and feedback systems); leadership as well as sustainability are the critical components that should occur across the six main concepts for effective implementation. It also involves dealing

with people with various behaviors that contribute to the program implementation effectiveness as mentioned in Bertram et al. (2015) in the implementation frameworks.

## **7. Ethical Consideration**

This study was conducted in accordance with the principles of ethics and permission from the ethics committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) BREC (Biomedical Research Ethics Council), under the protocol reference number: BE112/14.

## **8. Conclusion**

This study had demonstrated that opportunities exist for advancing progress with the HIV priority programs through effective implementation of rapid changes in spite of the program rapidly changing due to the HIV epidemic evolving. However, this requires multiple pronged approaches to addressing key bottlenecks that hinder change implementation as well as increased efforts by health care workers, those in program coordination as well as patients as program recipients. The HIV program will continue to evolve due to changes in policies as well as the evolving HIV epidemic, which requires rapid effective implementation of changes for the HIV programs.

Various factors need to be considered for effective implementation of changes to work towards virtual elimination of MTCT of HIV. These factors include; addressing issues of delayed communication of rapid changes to the health care workers as well as to patients, community engagement factors that need to be considered, health worker related factors that enable or inhibit change implementation which include skills deficit for change, leadership and management within health care facilities. The following recommendations were therefore made.

## **9. Recommendations**

The model contains generic principles for any program effective change implementation, which can be useful in the resource constraints setting to improve implementation of programs. This study will add to the body of existing knowledge on gaps in implementation of changes in programs resulting from frequent policy changes. It offered solutions to be considered for effective implementation of a program, which is of public health concern. The policy makers can utilize the model during the policy

making process which considers implementation as a process that require prior planning ahead of implementation and considers experiences from front line workforce.

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# Curbing Corruption: An Exploration of Measures to Reduce Corruption and Service Delivery Backlogs in South African Municipalities

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**Abstract:** This study was conducted because of the countless complaints and media reports from South African residents on the prevalence and impact of corruption on service delivery. For instance, residents in Greater Tzaneen Municipality, Polokwane Local Municipality and Emfuleni Local Municipality have since engaged in service delivery protests due to corruption. Thus, this study examines the prevalence and impact of corruption on service delivery and thereafter explores various measures to reduce corruption and service delivery backlogs in South African municipalities. This study used a qualitative research methodology and the New Public Management paradigm to explore measures that can be used to curb corruption and ultimately improve service delivery in South African municipalities. The impact of corruption is severe at the local level, where government is most visible to the people. By exploring the extent of the impacts of corruption, it is found that corruption threatens democracy and undermines provisions of Chapter 7 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. In other words, corruption negatively impacts basic services, such as clean water, sanitation, electricity, and employment opportunities. The study recommends that South African municipalities need skilled personnel, effective and efficient oversight structures, independent watchdog measures, independent institutions, internal audits, whistleblower protection, and media empowerment to overcome the prevalence and persistence of corruption. The study also suggests South African municipalities should transition to e-municipalities to streamline administrative processes, decrease bureaucratic paperwork, and enhance service delivery efficiency.

**Keywords:** Corruption, e-Municipalities, New Public Management, Service delivery, Oversight, Watchdog

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## 1. Introduction

South Africa's local government established post-apartheid is responsible for service delivery (Jegede & Shikwambane, 2021; Burchardt, 2022). Service delivery is defined as the provision of necessities such as water, electricity, sanitary facilities, land, and housing in the South African context (Molina et al., 2017). Unfortunately, the government's delivery and upkeep of essential services is unstable, seriously disrupting or endangering large populations of citizens. As a result, there have been more "service delivery protests" in recent years from 2004-2022, or rallies that demand better service delivery (Mamokhere, 2022). Corruption and inefficient allocation of resources in service delivery are widespread in low- and middle-income countries. There is increasing evidence that corruption holds back countries' economic development and erodes their citizens' quality of life. Millions of people around the world encounter administrative corruption in their daily interactions with public services (Molina et al., 2017).

Similarly, Naidoo and Ramphal (2018) indicate that "globally, local municipalities are facing challenges in meeting their mandate of providing basic services that conform to the expectations of communities". However, the study by Mamokhere (2022) further concurs that there are underlying factors towards service delivery protests such as poor governance, corruption, nepotism, poor governance and political instability and interference.

Corruption is a powerful, sinister, and immoral practice that often stems from poor governance in developing countries (Underkuffler, 2014). Corruption is a complex and elusive concept that has been challenging to define according to various scholars. It is often described as the misuse of a position for personal gain or the benefit of individuals or groups. This behaviour includes acts like bribery, embezzlement, fraud, and nepotism. Corruption can manifest in different forms, such as bribery in business, politics, and sports, as well as political corruption involving the misuse of power and resources by government



officials for personal gain. Corruption is defined as the "abuse of entrusted power for private gain" (Nye, 1967), while Transparency International (2017) characterizes it as behaviour deviating from public role duties due to private interests. In South Africa, corruption has significant implications for sustainable service delivery (Molina et al., 2017). Corruption challenges can arise at the procurement stage, such as bribery and bribery schemes, which can hinder access to clean water and sanitation services (Transparency International, 2017). Public accountability in national, provincial, and local municipalities is crucial for reducing corruption in democratic South Africa (Mhango, 2018). The study will cover the problem statement, purpose of the study, research methodology and materials, theoretical paradigms, literature review, discussion, and conclusion and recommendations.

### **1.1 Problem Statement**

Corruption is a global concern with varying impacts among different countries, as highlighted by Ardigó (2017). Its consequences have far-reaching implications, hindering national economic growth and undermining the principles of good governance. The destabilizing impact of corruption erodes trust and weakens democratic governance, as noted by (Skenjana et al., 2019; Mamokhere, 2022). Furthermore, Madonsela (2010) emphasizes that corruption hampers economic development by diverting resources away from essential developmental initiatives for personal gains. This phenomenon leads to poor service delivery, inefficiency in resource utilization, and increased costs. As such, addressing corruption becomes crucial for promoting effective governance and sustainable development. Effective service delivery is crucial for residents due to the significant poverty and lack of employment opportunities in South Africa (Madonsela, 2010). Unemployment has become a worrying issue for South African youth which is caused by corrupt practices in both national and local government. Nepotism, favouritism, and cadre deployment are the main contributors to high poverty and unemployment (Mamokhere, 2022a).

The problem statement to be addressed in this case study is the prevalence and impact of corruption on service delivery within South African municipalities. Another problem statement to address is the lack of implementable measures to curb corruption. South African municipalities lack feasible measures to deal with corruption decisively. Therefore,

this study intends to propose measures that can be applied to reduce corruption and service delivery backlogs in local government as guided by the research objectives which is to explore the prevalence and impact of corruption on service delivery and thereafter explore various measures to reduce corruption and service delivery backlogs in South African municipalities.

## **2. Research Methodology and Materials**

Table 1 on the next page outlines the research methodology and materials used when conducting this study.

Based on Table 1, this study adopted a qualitative research methodology. The study specifically reviewed secondary data to explore the prevalence and impact of corruption on service delivery in South African municipalities. The author reviewed both national and international sources from accredited and non-accredited journals, dissertations, books, thesis, internet sources and other published readable materials. To gather this data, different databases have been used such as Google, Google Scholar, and Scopus. The thematic discourse analysis approach was used to analyse the data. To ensure validity and reliability, the authors were not biased in the selection of secondary data, different keywords were used to search for relevant data.

## **3. Theoretical Paradigm: New Public Management**

In this study, corruption has been noted as a persistent challenge at various levels of government, including local municipalities. Mismanagement of funds, embezzlement, and bribery have hampered development initiatives and service delivery, diverting resources away from where they are most needed (Thusi & Selepe, 2023). Therefore, New Public Management (NPM) provides the theoretical paradigm for this study. NPM was first applied in Western nations to restructure the management of state affairs and activities in the public sector, placing a focus on effectiveness, efficiency, and client satisfaction (Munzhedzi, 2021; Mamokhere & Mabunda, 2023). Critics have argued that adopting private sector techniques may be in contradiction with public principles like impartiality and justice, which have been the topic of controversy about the adoption of NPM reforms (Munzhedzi, 2021).

**Table 1: Research Methodology**

Aspects	Description
Research Methodology and Design	This study adopted a qualitative research methodology. The study specifically reviewed secondary data. Typically, qualitative research uses non-numerical data collection methods, such as interviews, focus groups, observations, or content analysis.
Aim/Objective	Qualitative research methodology was used to explore and understand the prevalence and impact of corruption on service delivery in South African municipalities. The method was also used to explore measures to curb corruption and improve service delivery.
Data Collection	In qualitative research, the following tools are often used; in-depth interviews, participant observations, focus groups, or content/document review. Therefore, for this study, the authors used secondary data in the form of a review of existing data. To gather this data, different databases have been used such as Google, Google Scholar, and Scopus.
Data Analysis	Commonly, the following analysis approaches are often used when conducting qualitative research; Thematic analysis, content analysis, narrative analysis, or grounded theory. For this study, the authors used a thematic content analysis approach.
Data Validity	To ensure validity, reliability and credibility, the authors were not biased in the selection of secondary data, different keywords were used to search for relevant data.
Ethical Considerations	Based on the nature of this study, no ethical clearance was obtained because the study does not involve human and animal participants. The authors have followed the ethical considerations required for theoretical study. Therefore, the authors have acknowledged all the sources consulted by citing them in-text and a list of references. Anti-plagiarism was one of the ethical requirements followed.
Strengths	The authors have adopted a qualitative research methodology because it provides rich, detailed insights, experiences, and perspectives. The qualitative research methodology is cost-effective, time-efficient, comprehensive coverage and access to existing knowledge.
Limitations	Methodologically, this study is limited to a qualitative research methodology only.

Source: Compiled by the author(s) (2023)

On the other hand, academics like Lapuente and Van de Walle (2020) argue that to enhance service delivery, public institutions should adopt private-sector management approaches including performance assessment and incentive structures. Implementing NPM principles in South Africa, such as performance-based contracts and precise service delivery targets, may improve service delivery. With an emphasis on the requirement for an ethical, qualified, and accountable public workforce, NPM has gradually merged principles from economics and the private sector into the administration of public funds (Fatile, 2014). Since the 1980s, NPM has had a substantial impact on public administration practices and disciplines, attempting to solve

problems including resource wasting, lack of trust in bureaucracy, poor program design, and poor performance (Rulashe & Ijeoma, 2022). Numerous investigations have been conducted on the frequent service delivery demonstrations in South African municipalities, with general hypotheses examining possible causes. These theories could not, however, have completely grasped the precise fundamental cause. Thus, NPM's significance stems from its emphasis on effectiveness, efficiency, and economics, all of which are in line with the fundamental ideas of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996). To maintain service delivery sustainably, the Constitution also underlines the significance of ethical, responsible,

transparent, and professional behaviour among public authorities (RSA, 1996). Despite the nation's progressive legal and constitutional structures, has already been indicated that the core causes of bad service delivery are complicated and multidimensional (Ibok, 2014; Mamokhere, 2022). Reddy (2016), Vyas-Doorgapersad and Masibigiri (2022) emphasized that to date, several government proposals have been put up to address problems with service delivery and municipal dysfunction, but none have produced any discernible improvement in the crisis of local administration. This adoption of this theoretical paradigm in this study was beneficial due to its grounded arguments and contribution to local governance.

## **4. Literature Review**

### **4.1 Prevalence of Corruption in South African Municipalities**

Countless complaints and media reports from South African residents on the prevalence and impact of corruption on service delivery have been noted. Mamokhere (2022a) and Kgobe et al. (2023) indicate that the prevalence of corruption in South African municipalities continues to be a source of worry, impeding effective governance and sustainable service delivery. Across the country, according to Corruption Watch (2021), Corruption Watch received a record number of 857 claims from whistle-blowers in 2020 about poor governance and corruption in local government. Figure 1 and Figure 2 on the next page show the prevalence of corruption practices in different provinces of South Africa.

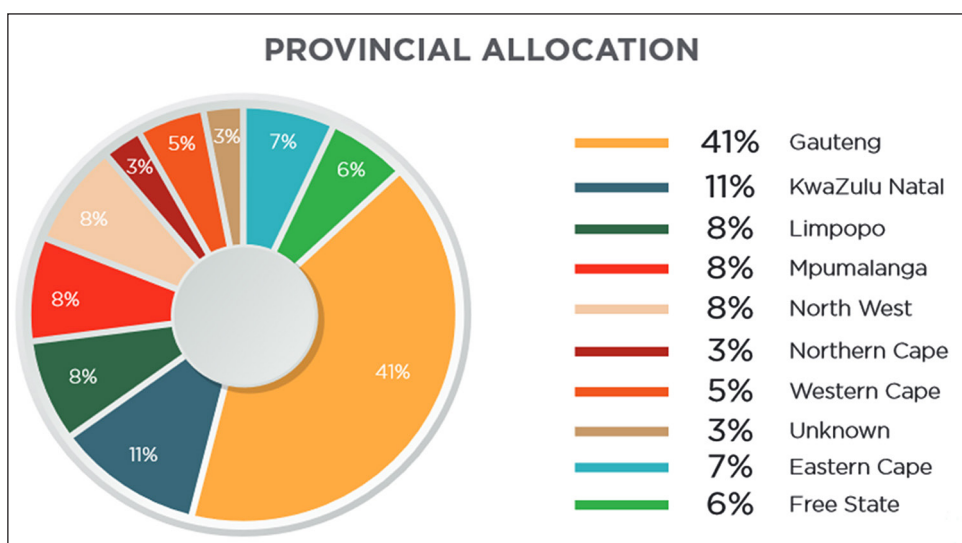
In terms of Figure 1, Provincially in South Africa, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo municipalities accounted for 11% and 8%, respectively, of the second and third greatest number of reports. Gauteng province is the highest province with the prevalence of corruption practices and poor governance counting for 41%. Moreover, in Figure 2, the study used Gauteng Province as a case study, it is also reported that the most prevalent type of corruption is bribes counting 50%, followed by 12% of abuse of power, 7% of irregularities in the procurement process, 5% of maladministration, 3% in irregularities in getting employment, 3% in embezzlement and stealing of funds and lastly 3% for failure to act / poor compliance. Based on the Corruption Watch Report 2021, corruption is prevalent in the country. According to the survey, procurement

irregularities, bribery, embezzlement, and nepotism were among the common forms of corruption in the South African municipalities in Gauteng and Limpopo Province. Furthermore, the South African Auditor-General's Municipal Audit results for 2020/2021 found that irregular expenditure across municipalities totalled R32.06 billion, demonstrating a continuous problem of financial mismanagement and corruption inside these institutions (Auditor-General of South Africa, 2021; Corruption Watch, 2021). These numbers highlight the critical need for strong anti-corruption measures and stronger accountability mechanisms to address South African municipalities' prevalent corruption concerns (AGSA, 2021). Also, "In 2021, the Department of Cooperative Governance reported that 64 municipalities were dysfunctional. This dysfunction is rooted in poor governance, weak institutional capacity, poor financial management, corruption, and political instability. In June 2017, eight municipalities were under administration or provincial intervention. By June 2021, 23 municipalities were under administration or provincial intervention, which further increased to 33 municipalities by February 2022" (Mamokhere, 2022; IOL, 2022).

### **4.2 Impact of Corruption on Service Delivery in South Africa**

The impact of corruption is severe at the local level, where government is most visible to the people. The 2019/20-year report revealed that municipalities incurred irregular expenditure of R26 billion and fruitless and wasteful spending of around R3.47 billion. A recent report by Corruption Watch reveals the varied nature of corruption in local government. Offences vary from procurement process irregularities to embezzlement of funds, employment irregularities, bribery, abuse of power, conflict of interest and nepotism (Chelin, 2021; IOL, 2022). In Africa, corruption is a serious issue that costs the continent's states an estimated 25% of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) each year. Concerning South African municipalities, this study emphasizes the impact of corruption on long-term service delivery numerous corruption scandals and instances, some of which have been revealed by the Zondo Commission of Inquiry into State Capture (IOL, 2022) demonstrate the frightening levels of corruption that exist in South Africa. The provision of equitable, high-quality healthcare services is hampered in these nations by corruption and poor governance (Satyal, 2023). Similarly, Mabeba (2021) indicates

**Figure 1: Prevalence of Corruption per Provincial Allocation**



Source: Corruption Watch (2021)

**Figure 2: Types of Corruption**

TYPE OF CORRUPTION		% OF REPORTS	
Bribe		50%	
Abuse of power		12%	
Irregularities in procurement process		7%	
Maladministration		5%	
Irregularities in getting employment		3%	
Embezzlement and stealing of funds		3%	
Failure to act		3%	
CITY OF JOHANNESBURG	LOCAL GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT/OFFICE		% OF REPORTS
	Metro/local police		62%
	Office of the municipal manager		11%
	Housing and human settlements		8%
	Traffic and licensing		7%
	Office of the executive		3%

Source: Corruption Watch (2021)

that according to published research, corruption makes it more difficult for South African municipalities to offer essential services. Corruption in South Africa significantly hampers poverty alleviation initiatives, exacerbating social and economic inequalities. It diverts resources away from programs

aimed at reducing poverty, leading to reduced effectiveness and reach of these initiatives. Furthermore, corrupt practices hinder economic growth, deter foreign investment, and contribute to income inequality and a lack of job opportunities (Burger, 2012; Nkosi, Biekpe & Omotosho, 2019). Multiple



studies have extensively documented the negative impact of corruption and poor governance on poverty in South Africa (Burger, 2012; Nkosi, Biekpe & Omotosho, 2019). Mamokhere (2022) highlights that corruption in South Africa has caused significant and long-lasting consequences. The negative impacts include discouraging investments, causing substantial economic losses, worsening poverty, and inequality, leading to dysfunctionality in the public sector, triggering service delivery protests and unrest, resulting in human rights violations, and fueling public frustration. The literature consistently indicates that corruption disproportionately affects the poor (Seopela, 2012; Mabeba, 2021). In South Africa, poor governance and corrupt practices by public officials and politicians have contributed to a high rate of unemployment. According to Statistics South Africa (May 2023), the official unemployment rate reached 32.9% in the first quarter of 2023. Decent work opportunities are scarce, and nepotism plays a significant role in employment, as those with connections are favoured for decent job opportunities. Corruption further reduces employment opportunities, as decisions are often not based on fairness, merit, and equity, leading to the denial of opportunities for many citizens (Manyaka & Sebola, 2013; Anti-Corruption Day, 2022). This situation perpetuates inequality and hinders the economic well-being of the country. Given all these, Mabeba (2021) indicates that "corruption impacts service delivery in the sense that clientelism, patronage and bribery compromise the rights of citizens against equal access to municipal services while promoting inequalities that limit constituents' access to basic services like water. Consequently, the poor and voiceless residents end up being affected the most along the process". In summary, poor governance and corruption contribute to the following issues:

- Poor and inconsistent service delivery.
- High rate of unemployment.
- High-level poverty and inequalities.
- Negative impact on economic growth, e.g. discourage investment/investors in the country.
- Contributes to service delivery protest which undermines democracy maturity.
- Contribute to existing energy crises such as load-shedding.

#### 4.3 Discussion of Theoretical Results

Based on the findings, effective governance and long-term service delivery are seriously hampered by the pervasiveness of bad governance and corruption in South African municipalities. Corruption Watch reports a high number of whistle-blower allegations, with Gauteng province having the highest prevalence at 41%, involving bribery, irregularities in procurement, and embezzlement. The South African Auditor-General's Municipal Audit exposes R32.06 billion in irregular expenditure across municipalities, reflecting ongoing issues with financial mismanagement and corruption (Corruption Watch, 2022; AGSA, 2021). Factors driving corruption include inadequate regulations, limited resources prioritizing tangible goods over accountability, and political interference. Corruption negatively impacts sustainable service delivery, diverting resources from poverty alleviation, hindering economic growth and investment, exacerbating income inequality, and leading to unemployment and public sector dysfunctionality (Legodi, 2017; Satyal, 2023). It disproportionately affects the poor, triggering service delivery protests and violating human rights. Corruption's repercussions extend to energy crises like load-shedding (Mabeba, 2021; Mamokhere, 2022a; Kgobe et al., 2023).

#### 4.4 Curbing Corruption: Possible Measures to Reduce Corruption and Service Delivery Backlogs in South African Municipalities

Most municipalities frequently experience corruption, financial mismanagement, and noncompliance with financial regulations. As a result, these lead to poor performance, which compromises the provision of basic services. There is a need for urgent priority to find innovative solutions to combat corruption, lack of good governance and other administrative malpractices within South African municipalities. Consequently, this study proposes possible answers to these corrupt practice problems. The following are some of the possible measures which can be applied in different municipalities to combat corruption and improve service delivery.

##### 4.4.1 Curbing Corruption: Promoting Financial Compliance

IDASA (2010) and Hanyane and Naidoo (2012) indicated that there is a need for urgent priority to find innovative solutions to combat corruption,

lack of good governance and other administrative malpractices within South African municipalities. Local government transformation in South Africa has applied considerable pressure on municipalities to manage their financial resources effectively, economically, and efficiently (3Es) to meet their developmental mandate (Mamokhere, Musitha & Netshidzivhani, 2021). Therefore, municipalities need to improve sound financial management. To achieve this, municipalities must enhance their financial management by appointing qualified and capable officials, such as Chief Financial Officers (CFOs) and internal auditors, who possess the appropriate skills. The study recommends accountability for results, municipal officials should not just report on budget spending only. Strengthening the institutions responsible for enforcing accountability of public resources is crucial. Municipalities must assess and strengthen their internal control systems to handle problems including poor management of municipal finances, fraud, and corruption. This involves enhancing the effectiveness and suitability of audit committees and internal audits. To guarantee that these procedures are effective in tackling corruption and related issues, managerial officials must monitor them effectively. Similarly, municipal officials must account for results, not only for budget spending and as more resources are transferred to the local government there is a need to strengthen the institutions that enforce accountability of public resources (Chelin, 2021; Mamokhere, Musitha & Netshidzivhani, 2021). Moji, Nhede and Masiya (2022) imply that to fight the scourge of maladministration, mismanagement of municipal finances, fraud and corruption, municipalities need to strengthen and review their existing internal control systems that detect the above-mentioned deficiencies. These include verifying the quality and appropriateness of internal audit and audit committees. Therefore, this requires effective monitoring by the officials in managerial positions.

#### **4.4.2 Open Local Government System**

Andersson and Anechiarico (2019) indicate that implementing an open local government approach in South African municipalities can create an environment where corruption becomes more difficult to hide and easier to detect and combat. By involving citizens, improving transparency, and strengthening oversight mechanisms, local governments can significantly reduce corruption in service delivery, ultimately benefiting the communities they serve. IDASA (2010) similarly indicates that open

government should be emphasized in the management of local affairs. Local government should be accountable, transparent, and open to public scrutiny.

According to AGSA (2022), to curb corruption in South African municipalities, several key strategies can be employed. These include enhancing transparency and access to information by making financial data and service delivery information readily available to the public. Citizen engagement is crucial through public consultations and complaint mechanisms, which involve the community in decision-making and encourage reporting of corruption. Open data practices enable independent monitoring and data analytics to detect irregularities. Accountability mechanisms, like independent audits and oversight bodies, help identify and address corruption. Encouraging technology and training can improve service delivery and professionalism, while civil society and media involvement bolster transparency and accountability efforts (Feinstein, 2021).

#### **4.4.3 Political and Administrative Tensions**

Pretorius (2017) indicates that the current prevailing political and administrative tensions must be resolved to enhance and deepen local democracy. The relationship between politics and administration should ensure that political concerns do not compromise the administration of the municipality which is the core element of ensuring service delivery. For instance, this relationship should guarantee that councillors do not exert pressure on officials to act in the interest of his/her constituencies. There should be a balance between politics and administrative responsibilities.

#### **4.4.4 Capacity Building**

Building capacities of municipal officials becomes essential for municipalities to fulfil and optimally achieve their obligations envisaged in the constitution and other national policies. Capacity building is one of the most essential tools available to local government in bridging the gaps in what is expected of municipal officials and what they can deliver. In the context of the overall transformation of local government skills development is critical as it lays the basis for a more people-oriented local government system, able to meet the demands of the people for democracy, reconstruction, and development. For local government to work there is a need for investment in capacity building of councillors and officials. Stakeholders involved in such

capacity-building initiatives need to organize their programs for greater impact and to link them more accurately to the national democratic transition (IDASA, 2021; Thusi & Selepe, 2023).

Vienna (2020) indicates that capacity building has traditionally focused on expanding government facilities and skills. The traditional focus of capacity building focuses on finance, infrastructure, equipment, and technical skills training. These initiatives are important, but without leadership confidence in introducing accountability, transparency and a focus on objectives and results, the sustainable effect of these initiatives is questionable. On the other hand, the new approach to capacity building emphasizes the importance of leadership and an integrity mindset among public servants. Vienna (2020) indicates that "mindset" refers to the outlook and state of mind that policy-makers and civil servants bring to their jobs. Integrity is critical when appointments of key executive or civil service positions are made and is equally important among politicians. Therefore, this study recommends a new approach to deal with corruption in the public sector. Figure 3 below distinguish traditional and new approach to capacity building.

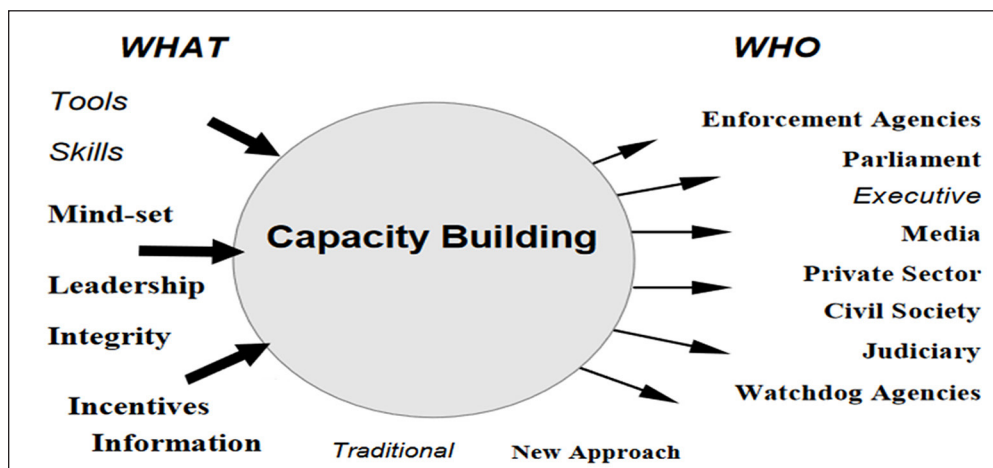
Based on Figure 3, capacity building focused almost entirely on strengthening the capacity of government to deliver public services and reduce corruption. On the other hand, Mamokhere (2022) indicates that capacity building plays a vital role in curbing corruption in South African municipalities by empowering government officials and employees

with the knowledge, skills, and ethical values necessary to resist corrupt practices and promote transparent governance. Through targeted training programs, capacity building fosters a culture of integrity, professionalism, and accountability within the local government workforce. It equips personnel with anti-corruption measures and best practices in service delivery, enabling them to better identify, prevent, and report corrupt activities. Additionally, Mamokhere and Mabunda (2023) indicate that capacity building enhances the effectiveness of oversight and compliance mechanisms, ultimately contributing to more robust and resilient efforts to combat corruption and improve service delivery in South African municipalities.

**4.4.5 Promoting Good Governance in Budgeting and Integrated Development Plans (IDPs)**

The effectiveness of municipalities in delivering on their mandate is largely dependent on their ability to plan and allocate public resources developmentally and sustainably. Therefore, it is significant that municipalities carefully integrate community needs in their development plans and when allocating budgets. It is essential to note that the IDP is informed by the resources which can be afforded and allocated through the budget process. Therefore, the budget must, in turn, be aligned with the IDP and its objectives and strategies. The processes are, therefore, not separate, and distinct; they are integrally linked and are related. Furthermore, municipalities must ensure that the budget supports the achievement of the objectives set in the IDP and the attainment

**Figure 3: Traditional and New Approach of Capacity Building**



Source: Vienna (2020)

of the overall vision of the council. This again requires a high-level community participating in the formulation of IDPs and budget allocations. After all, the content of the IDP must represent a consensus reached with the community through various community participation processes. The significance of this is clear in that it enables the community to hold the council accountable for the attainment of the goals and targets set in the IDP (IDASA, 2010; Mamokhere & Mabunda, 2023).

#### **4.4.6 Encouraging Civil Society Organization (CSO) Participation: Watchdog and Mass Media**

Mamokhere and Mabunda (2023) propose that amending the legislation to protect whistleblowers is vital because it creates an environment where individuals feel safe and encouraged to disclose cases of governmental misconduct and corruption without fear of retaliation. This legal protection is a crucial deterrent against corrupt practices within South African municipalities. Additionally, Phiri (2023) indicates that supporting and empowering civil society organizations and mass media to serve as vigilant watchdogs is essential. These entities play a pivotal role in scrutinizing government activities, uncovering corruption cases, and promoting transparency by holding officials accountable for their actions. Their involvement serves as a critical check on the power of local government, helping to uncover and deter corruption in South African municipalities.

#### **4.4.7 Promoting Digital Technologies Like e-Municipalities**

Embracing digital transformation entails adopting digital technologies within South African municipalities (hereafter e-municipalities) to revolutionize administrative processes, reduce bureaucratic paperwork, and significantly enhance the overall efficiency of service delivery (Nel-Sanders & Malomane, 2022). Mahmood (2016) and Ramoriting (2022) indicate that by implementing digital solutions, municipalities can not only increase their operational speed and accuracy but also reduce the potential for corruption. This is particularly evident in critical areas such as procurement, where digital systems can create transparent, automated processes that minimize human intervention, thereby diminishing opportunities for corrupt practices like bribery, bid arranging, and favouritism. In essence, digital transformation plays a pivotal role in modernizing and safeguarding municipal operations against corruption, promoting transparency,

accountability, and effectiveness in the delivery of public services.

#### **4.4.8 Promoting Municipal Oversight and Committees Systems**

Implementing an effective oversight system is a best practice to curb corruption in South African municipalities. Oversight, as emphasized by Kraai, Holtzhausen and Malan (2022) involves vigilant monitoring of executive actions to enhance service delivery and uphold good governance principles. Municipal authorities, according to Toxopeüs (2019) should efficiently execute policies and laws to provide essential services. This is facilitated through two vital committees: Municipal Public Accounts Committees (MPACs) for internal oversight and municipal audit committees for external monitoring. These committees employ various tools like internal financial controls, audits, risk management, and compliance measures to advise municipal councils and address concerns raised by the Auditor General. The most widely used oversight methods include internal control, internal auditing, and financial reporting, all aimed at ensuring ethical, efficient, and effective financial operations and resource management within municipalities. This comprehensive oversight framework promotes transparency, accountability, and clean audit processes, ultimately mitigating corruption in local governance (Moji et al., 2022). The author(s) of this study assume that MPACs and audit committees perform nearly identical roles. With limited resources and capacity constraints, particularly in smaller municipalities such as Greater Tzaneen Municipality, councils should ensure that work is not duplicated by clearly defining their respective roles and functions in the terms of reference that are set. Clear mandates for both committees will yield the desired outcomes.

#### **4.4.9 Raising Public Awareness**

Increasing public consciousness plays a pivotal role in preventing corruption. Vienna (2020) indicates that prevention of corruption can manifest in various ways, including:

- Launching public education and awareness initiatives via mediums such as radio, newspapers, and television.
- Organizing annual, inclusive national or municipal integrity workshops where all stakeholders are invited to address issues and propose improvements.



- Educating citizens about their rights through a Citizens' Charter and empowering them to oversee the government through regular service delivery surveys.
- Developing and distributing a national integrity strategy and an annual corruption survey at the national, municipal, and sub-county levels.
- Creating integrity surveys at the municipal or sub-national level.
- Encouraging investigative journalism and media-based information dissemination.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, corruption has emerged as a global problem that threatens sustainable service delivery. It is characterized by the exploitation of authority for personal gain through various means such as bribery, coercion, favouritism, and misappropriation of funds. South African public institutions have experienced the detrimental effects of corruption, leading to compromised service delivery in areas like clean water, sanitation, electricity, and employment opportunities. Corruption undermines democratic principles, denying equal rights and impeding sustainable development efforts. The study recommends that South African municipalities require skilled personnel, effective and efficient oversight structures, watchdog mechanisms, independent institutions, internal audits, whistle-blower protection, and media empowerment to curb the prevalence and persistence of corruption. The study further embraces that South African municipalities should adopt e-municipalities to revolutionize administrative processes, reduce bureaucratic paperwork, and significantly enhance the overall efficiency of service delivery.

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# Critical Assessment of Public Administration Ethics and Methods of Enhancing Good Governance in Public Departments of South Africa

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**Abstract:** Public administration ethics codes typically consist of three main components: a statement of ideals, behaviors that are consistent with these objectives, and mandatory ways to enforce the behaviors within the parameters of the code. It is essential for the existence of an ethical government to comprehend the guiding values and moral principles of a government, how they were formed and evolved, who they belong to and who they serve, and how they are implemented through public administration. Ethical issues are evident at all levels of public administration, in all nonprofit and governmental organizations such as financial conflicts of interest and impartiality, such as a public servant awarding a contract to a company, they personally own; a senior official requesting his or her secretary for a holiday gift is an example of gifts and payments; employee using position and resources provided by the government to support a family trip; a military officer who has additional jobs and hobbies is a military contractor. The goal of Ethics and Governance is to provide participants a better knowledge of ethics and how it affects decision-making. The implementation of moral standards and conditions into a company's management, governance, and control systems is what the ethics of governance is all about. Along with authority and accountability for key positions, the governance model should specify a method for resolving disagreements. Governance arrangements may improve the harmony and communication between risk managers and decision-makers. The essay is conceptual since it gathers data by studying the available literature, laws, and pertinent reports. The paper also makes suggestions for enhancing moral behavior and sound management in government agencies.

**Keywords:** Ethics, Good governance, Public departments, Methods, Public Administration

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## 1. Introduction

This article focuses on the assessment of public administration ethics and methods of enhancing good governance in public departments of South Africa. To fulfill their duties to the public good, defend ideals, and promote society, public administrators must adhere to ethical principles that are based on moral principles. Public institutions must employ good governance to guarantee the fulfillment of human rights and the management of public resources in a way that is mainly free from abuse, corruption, and disdain for the rule of law.

## 2. Conceptualisation of Public Administration Ethics

Schwartz (2016) described ethics as "a set of values, frequently referred to as a code or systems that serve as a guide to behavior". Ethics must be viewed as essential concepts underlying human life that encompass ideas of good and wrong and

are ingrained in all communities (Floridi, Cowls, Beltrametti, Chatila, Chazerand, Dignum & Vayena, 2021:19). According to Broome (2021), ethics are guiding principles for public managers' actions and behavior. Conventions were a part of the original definition of ethics, which is derived from the Greek term *ethos* and means right action or the right set of beliefs when used in its context. In some circumstances, ethics and morality may overlap depending on what society wishes to achieve. South Africa's varied cultures make ethics a challenging subject. Sagoff (2017) asserts that the focus of ethics is on whether a certain action is improper, unsuitable, horrible, or right.

Depending on what a scholar is trying to show, different definitions of ethics in good governance exist. Ethics, in the opinion of Iggers (2018), is concerned with upholding humanity. When public servants behave ethically, they demonstrate what makes us unique and the need to respect our integrity. Ethics is "about what we ought to do" and not just



about the self in isolation (Titz, 2023). According to Drumwright *et al.* (2015), public officials must act ethically or make an ethical decision in response to a circumstance or issue that may have developed in their conduct while performing their powers and obligations. This pertains to concerns with service delivery and managing the performance of other employees, particularly those in managerial positions. When faced with moral decisions, public authorities must make decisions logically to not negatively affect anyone else (McNabb, 2017). According to Wright, Zammuto and Liesch (2017:200), normative ethics represent a chance to separate from existing courses of action based on the interpretation of shared values that are evident in continuing institutional practice and a significant portion of communal life.

In the study of public administration, the term "ethics" is vague both as a subject of study and as a discipline. Since there is no agreed-upon definition for the concept, scholars frequently define it in ways that support their own interpretation or presentation. Simply described, ethics is a branch of public administration that focuses on how public employees perform their obligations. Analysts typically claim that accountability and ethics are intertwined. It is difficult to administer accountability in South Africa's modern public administration given the escalating level of corruption in public institutions.

The national, provincial, and local levels of government in South Africa all speak to good governance and are influenced by the social-political, economic, cultural, and historical contexts of the country. The administrative systems in the public sector are impacted by these factors. It is essential that administrators are given a code of ethics for them to carry out their public duties in a transparent and accountable manner, and as a result, observe and adhere to them. For the purposes of this discussion, Gabriel (2020) underlines that ethics should be viewed as a collection of commonly accepted ideas, guiding principles, and norms. Therefore, the study of what is ethically good or bad is known as ethics. According to Vallor (2016), public administrators should be the stewards of ethics and protect and respect the code to increase the effectiveness of public organizations. In light of the aforementioned, this discussion tries to caution public administrators from using corrupt methods for their own gain. Adhering to all accountability mechanisms is vital to ensure moral behavior.

In the field of public administration, ethics has been shown to be more than just a theoretical idea; it is also a viable strategy and a crucial subject of research (Ritz, Brewer & Neumann, 2016). According to Shapiro and Stefkovich (2016), there are complicated challenges with public administration's application of ethics. These four issues mostly concern how public officials behave within their organizations. Van Wart (2016) claims that there is still a lack of clarity between public administration and ethics despite the numerous types of research that have been done to define how the concept should be implemented in the public sector. According to Fernandez and Rainey (2017), public administration must evolve if public officials are to understand the importance of ethics and keep their organizations effective.

The South African public sector must place a high priority on ethics to provide services or deliver public goods and services. According to Rosenbloom, Kravchuk and Clerkin (2022), ethics in public sector enterprises are supported by ideals that place a strong emphasis on efficiency and maximizing inputs and outputs. The service delivery process incorporates the ideas of collectivity, judging norms, and reciprocity. Ethics must be a part of the public market for delivering services to communities. Public employees must therefore consider the needs of the public and act accordingly to protect ethics.

Ethics play a crucial role in the public sector because they promote trust and responsibility, two qualities that are crucial to effective governance. Even though trust is not something that public authorities expect, Head (2016) finds that it enhances connections between public managers and between departments in public organizations. This could improve the efficiency of the public employees. Trust also reveals the existence of ethics, the glue that holds public leadership together to improve service delivery in communities. Ethics via trust foster a productive workplace for different types of leadership inside a business. This discussion suggests that moral conduct in the public sector corresponds to effective governance, which is required for organizational growth and service delivery in general (Twizeyimana, Damascene & Andersson, 2019).

According to Henry (2020), ethics and good governance are fundamental principles that can show if public sector organizations are accountable, honest, effective, and efficient at serving their communities.

McNabb (2017) urges lawmakers and policymakers to take a trailblazing and innovative role in upholding accountability to the people to prevent corruption. Bright (2021) concurs that implementing the code of conduct for public employees in the public sector is like a mountainous task. In that case, more employees should be involved in the development and implementation of the code so that they are aware of how crucial it is for workers to behave ethically.

### 3. Law Governing Ethics in South Africa

Public servants are required by the *Public Service Act 103 of 1994* to respect moral standards while carrying out their civic responsibilities. According to Maemu (2021), this legal framework promotes high standards of ethical conduct and outlines the steps to be taken when dealing with unproductive and inefficient public personnel. The *Public Service Regulations of 1999* must be acknowledged as the primary legal standard governing how public officials behave while carrying out their duties. Maemu (2021) asserts that this Act's Section 20 deals with misbehavior. It stands as a brilliant illustration of how the government is using legislation to fight against corruption and subpar administration of public organizations. Section 21 of *Public Service Regulations of 1999* explains the sanctions for this behavior and denounces improper behavior by public employees. Any disobedience shall therefore be severely punished in accordance with the law. Another framework that controls the maintenance of ethics in public administration is the *Public Audit Act 25 of 2004*.

According to this piece of legislation, the Office of the AG must operate independently from the direct supervision of the government. Note that Article 46 of the Act prohibits any employer or employee from engaging in party politics because doing so would weaken the independence of the Office of the AG. This does not, however, imply attending a public event on a personal or unofficial basis. Additionally, it is mandatory for all public employees who work for the Office of the AG to decline illicit contributions because doing so would result in a deduction from their pay (Gabriel, 2020).

The South African government implemented the *Public Finance Management Act 1 of 1999* (PFMA) to enhance the effective and responsible provision of services. This legal framework promotes moral behavior among public employees who

oversee municipal funds. The *Municipal Financial Management Act 56 of 2003* (MFMA), Treasury Regulations for departments, constitutional institutions, and trading entities, and the *Provincial Tax Regulations Act, 2001* all require specific public officials to disclose their financial interests to prevent bias or corruption in financial transactions involving municipalities. Furthermore, Section 2 of the PFMA requires truthfulness, accountability, and openness to ensure effective management of public expenditure in terms of revenues, liabilities, and assets. Strong financial management is one factor that lowers corruption in government.

The *Constitution of South Africa of 1996* (hereafter referred to as the Constitution) establishes moral principles that public servants must follow in carrying out their duties. The values and standards that should guide South African public administration are outlined in Chapter 10 of the Constitution. *The Constitution's Section 195(1)*, which mandates that Public Administration must be directed by democratic values and principles, enshrines the following concepts:

- A high level of professional ethics that needs to be promoted and sustained.
- Efficient and strategic as well as efficient use of resources that must be sustained.
- Public administration must be development-oriented.
- Services must be delivered impartially, equally and without bias.
- People's needs must be addressed, and the public must be invited to participate in policy-making.
- Public administration must be accountable.
- Transparency must be engendered by providing timely, accessible, and accurate information to the public.
- Good human resource management and career development practices must be developed to maximize human capacity.
- Public administration must be generally representative of the South African people with

job and personnel management practices focused on capability, objectivity, and the need to address past imbalances to achieve inclusion and representation (Constitution of South Africa, 1996).

These legal imperatives, if implemented properly, can help limit ethical dilemmas which confront Public Administration in democratic South Africa.

#### **4. Integrity in South Africa's Public Sector**

The corruption cases that predominated the Zondo and Mkogoro Commissions show the extent of unethical activity in South African public administration. It is notable that the Gupta family corruption scandal involves the former president Jacob Zuma and other government officials. The national media's portrayal of the hearing as "state capture" rendered researchers and pundits helpless to ignore it, even if the process was contested and all parties denied wrongdoing. According to their research, Bovaird and Löffler (2015:3), officials should uphold moral standards when doing their public duties because doing so will enhance the provision of public services in a developing nation.

The obligation of the public service for development is carried out in large part by public officials in South African public administration. Public accountability is essential, according to Kuziemski and Misuraca (2020), and requires authorities to report to both the public and their superiors. In carrying out their responsibilities as good stewards of the people, public officials have the authority to make decisions that will benefit the general populace (Thornhill, 2012). Public servants have access to both private and public information on government actions, which they should responsibly utilize to enhance the quality of life for the public and protect their rights as a democratic society develops. When public employees carry out their duties without balancing their job and personal interests, a moral quandary result (Fowler, 2013).

To prevent public officials from straying from their core responsibility of serving the public in an open and accountable manner, ethics is consequently essential as a watchdog. Public authorities have the right to distinguish between right and wrong when doing their jobs. The residents of South Africa, who are the final users of public goods and services,

profit from the public administration thriving in the country because to the clear demarcation and knowledge of their duties. It should be highlighted that in public administration, ethics stands for good governance, something that South African public organizations should obstinately strive for. Respecting ethics is essential for anyone holding public office since it is in line with *Section 195 of the Constitution*. Savira and Tasrin (2018) show that following constitutional standards enable public servants to carry out their functions in a righteous, truthful, and answerable way.

According to Sebola (2015), upholding ethics in public administration is consistent with the 2001 African Union Charter on the Values and Principles of Public Administration. Public administrators and researchers also refer to this document as the Charter. He claims that morality promotes professionalism, objectivity in politics, and effective policy execution. Fair working conditions are improved, corruption is less likely, and fraud is less likely when public officials follow ethical standards and norms when providing goods and services (Thornhill, 2012). The unmasked voices of non-state actors who strive to sway policymakers and increase the effectiveness of the public sector uphold ethics in many developing countries.

According to Sagoff (2017), political-administrative conflicts are frequent in South African municipalities and result in inadequate service delivery to communities. Despite taking part in policymaking, politicians' moral character is regularly questioned; for instance, interfering in local government affairs is prevalent. This leads to protracted disagreements, which obstruct the provision of public services and promote unethical and corrupt behavior. In these circumstances, political office holders frequently behave in a supremacist way, particularly when it comes to political, social, and public accountability. According to Twizeyimana *et al.*, elected officials and politicians must agree on and abide by the standards of conduct that are relevant to each of their workplaces to maintain ethics in public administration.

Promoting a public administration that can meet the requirements of the populace is crucial. Political wrangling has had terrible effects for several government organizations. For instance, internal conflict resulted in the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality (Pretoria) coming under administration

after numerous party representatives stopped attending municipal meetings. As a result, unauthorized interruptions occurred (SA News, 2020). When the City of Tshwane challenged this ruling, the North Gauteng High Court subsequently dismissed the lawsuit (SA News, 2020). It has frequently demonstrated to be challenging due to a lack of political will and lax observance of the principles guiding the public service. Although *Chapter 10 of South Africa's Constitution of 1996* specifies that "high standards of professionalism and ethics must be promoted and maintained" in the public sector, not much has been done to enhance the way the department conducts its business.

## 5. South African Leadership and Service Delivery

Maintaining moral leadership in South Africa's public administration has not always been simple because of pervasive corruption and political interference in public institutions. Shava and Mazenda (2021) claim that inefficient delivery of public goods and services is hampered by the frequent discovery of public employees in South African local government breaking the law, engaging in fraud, corruption, and money laundering. Local governments in South Africa are subject to the undue influence of political power, which distorts decision-making. The frequent disagreements between the mayoral office and municipal manager have a negative impact on the delivery of public services because they delay the formulation of policies or the disbursement of cash. According to Makhanya (2022), political tensions have been the primary cause of poor service delivery in many South African municipalities, according to the Local Government Turnaround Strategy (2009b) and the State of Local Government Report (2009a). Furthermore, it is well known that unethical leadership stifles progress since powerful officials routinely shift resources away from initiatives that combat inequality, poverty, and underdevelopment (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2003). The moral decline in public administration has reached unprecedented levels due to the lack of effective internal controls, which causes inefficiencies in the bureaucracy.

The poor service delivery by local municipalities has been criticized by communities across South Africa, which explains the frayed ethical thread when service providers fail to carry out their responsibilities properly and ethically or are rendered ineffective by

enduring forces like political interference. It should be highlighted that in South Africa it is often difficult to distinguish between political involvement and service delivery. To test this hypothesis, consider a few municipal governments that provide services effectively regardless of the political party in control. The level of support political office holders receive affects how much service is offered to communities. Instances of leadership conflicts result in citizens being refused services since there are no ethical norms in place to ensure that end-users who are citizens are provided with, i.e. value for their money, as stated in the Batho Pele Doctrine (Garfin, Silver & Holman, 2020).

To improve service delivery through moral leadership, the National Treasury developed reporting templates for provincial treasuries to increase accountability, monitoring, and assessment of the entire supply chain management system. These initiatives aimed to lessen corruption in government, particularly in the procurement process (Ritz et al., 2016:220). It is claimed that South African Public Administration has advanced more in encouraging moral leadership in the three spheres of government (national, provincial, and municipal). The ability to put into reality the legal standards that should guide moral action is lacking, nevertheless. This demands moral leadership that can effect change, modify how public institutions carry out their duties within the bounds of the law, and provide the people who use government services with high-quality fundamental services.

## 6. Ethical Concerns in South African Public Administration

The challenges South African public employees have in discharging their duties are examined in this section. These challenges are drawn from several peer-reviewed works and South African Public Administration resources.

### 6.1 Inefficient Control Mechanisms

Corruption, a lack of desire to deliver high-quality services, and insufficient internal controls are only a few factors that contribute to ethical failures in public administration. It is possible for public officials to feel tempted to close any gaps in the framework of the rules or the code of conduct. Lax control policies that are not upheld lead to corrupt practices. Madonsela spoke about the extent of



corruption in South Africa's public sector in 2010 at the Nigerian Conference. She bemoaned how corruption has quickly taken the place of good service delivery in communities as its main cause. Effective anti-corruption initiatives, according to Spillan and Ziemnowicz (2011:4), "should consider both the nature and causes of public sector corruption".

According to Madonsela (2010), anti-corruption measures must be implemented to combat corruption. According to Johnston (2017), South Africa's partisan political climate makes it harder to provide a cogent analysis of the causes of corruption and ethical abuse due to the contextual nature of these issues. Most of the time, political corruption predominates, and it is frequently difficult to control since mechanisms are manipulated for individual gain.

## **6.2 Inadequate Transparency**

To sustain moral behavior in public administration, transparency in the discharge of public duties is required. Transparency and accountability are the foundation of any successful public enterprise. Document analysis reveals that excessive levels of bureaucracy at the top of South Africa's public administration are a hindrance to the transparency of decision-making processes like procurement. According to an audit opinion from the AG (2018), five municipalities in the province of Limpopo declined, showing signs of complacency with an unqualified financial statement. It was determined that low performers who committed numerous breaches were underperforming, and they got away with it. The building of the infrastructure and financial management both displayed poor accountability, which had a detrimental effect on the delivery of services. Seven municipalities in the Eastern Cape declined by failing to account for their supply chain management, exhibiting similar trends in the absence of accountability. According to Fourie and Malan (2020), AG (2018) lamented the incomplete infrastructure projects that resulted from poor project management and planning. To make matters worse, municipalities in the Eastern Cape spent R13, 558 billion (48% of total unauthorized spending) during that year. These figures show how unethical and irresponsible regional governments are (Sibanda, 2017).

Inadequate internal controls and a lack of accountability, according to Zakaria, Nawawi, and Salin

(2016), are two primary causes of unethical behavior and corruption in public administration. These elements cause public officials to act dishonestly and unethically while carrying out their official responsibilities. Numerous government organizations in South Africa award bonuses and performance reviews for a job well done, however this does not stop corruption and other unethical behavior (Bashir & Hassan, 2020). It is commonly believed that human nature drives us to want more at the expense of those who are less fortunate. The thesis of this article is that increased public trust and more effective service delivery would follow from government agencies using tax monies with greater openness and transparency.

## **6.3 Non-Authorized Spending**

Overspending or spending that does not adhere to the legal requirement of enough funds is known as "unauthorized expenditure" (Otley, 1978). Unauthorized spending is defined by the PFMA (as amended by Act 29 of 1999) as an expense that exceeds the allocated amount for a specific purpose. According to the findings of the AG Report (2018, Northwest Province experienced irregular expenditure, accounting for 15% of total irregular expenditure for the years 2016-2017 and 22% of their provincial expenditure budget. Furthermore, poor leadership led to a lack of accountability for prudent financial management, which is seen in the monetary stability of nearby communities. These numbers demonstrate the level of wasteful spending by government organizations, which has a negative impact on the delivery of public services. The effective, efficient, and affordable use of public resources is routinely disregarded in such spending. According to Basu (2004), improper expenditures in government agencies should be reported to the proper authorities so that the necessary steps can be taken in conformity with the current legal framework.

Even though Section 2 of the PFMA penalizes corruption and unethical behavior, inefficiencies in government spending continue to exist since money is wasted on ventures that don't benefit the state. Further research revealed that government departments regularly fail to uphold the standards for accountability and openness set forth in the PFMA, which presents a significant barrier to the delivery of effective services. Who will hold public officials accountable if they routinely flout the law is still an open topic. If ethics are not upheld, both public

servants and business leaders will continue to violate them. It is possible to argue that whistleblower policies can be put in place to aid in discouraging unethical behavior and preventing unauthorized spending in government agencies.

#### 6.4 Nepotism

Nepotism is one moral conundrum that has impacted South African public administration. Nepotism, according to Kawo and Torun (2020:53), is the act of appointing friends or family members to important public positions without taking their qualifications into account. They are more likely to violate the code of conduct or flout established norms and laws since newly appointed officials usually perform poorly to "please their master" (Hershkowitz, 2023). Such nepotism can lead to disgruntled workers and low staff morale in government organizations.

According to Bassey and Edemidiong (2021), those who will support the administration's political and ideological stance are assigned to higher municipal positions. The hiring of a fellow cadre could seem appropriate, but because of their unethical actions, many government departments operate poorly since they only pay attention to the recruitment authority. This tendency is widespread in South African public administration, which has poor performance and poor service delivery as a result. In public administration, nepotism is a warning sign of unethical behavior that damages a public organization's reputation and, on occasion, deters potential investors from doing business with the government.

Maemu (2021) expresses regret for nepotism when condemning the practice of recruiting people based on family connections in the public sector. For a few years, local governments have been unable to receive qualified audits due to, among other things, the disregard for AG reports or financial theft. This is sometimes connected to nepotism, where unqualified candidates manage government affairs without adequate training, direction, or understanding of what is expected of them in their positions. The findings of the AG Report (2018) indicate that poor leadership and accountability are the primary causes of low compliance with audit findings. Due to their inability to conduct financial audits, seven towns' financial viability was in jeopardy.

The AG (2018) affirms that a key impediment to municipalities in Gauteng receiving clean audits

was discovered to be a lack of legal compliance. These incidents serve as a reminder of the immoral conduct that prohibits governmental organizations from improving service delivery. Kokemuller (2020) claims that hiring friends and family members constitutes gross nepotism and leads to the wasteful and ineffective use of public resources as well as poor service delivery.

Discussions and arguments about South African public administration frequently use the case of Black people using affirmative action to enforce nepotism. The widespread service delivery protests that take place when individuals gather and take to the streets to confront the government about how public monies are used are evidence that nepotism has fueled the public's mistrust of government entities. So, according to the experts, nepotism is cancerous, capable of obliterating democracy, encouraging unethical behavior, and harming the standing of public administration. The public, media, social criticism, and political figures do not hesitate to cast doubt on the legitimacy of public administration when this happens.

#### 6.5 Corruption

Johnston (2017) defines corruption in South African public administration as the egregious abuse of authority or position for the advantage of one's own interests or the interests of friends or allies in politics. Public administration corruption in South Africa can take many different forms. Hess and Cottrell (2016) claim that corruption is a pervasive problem that is common in many areas of life, including business and the workplace. Analysts and experts in public administration concur that corruption is sometimes difficult to eradicate since it may involve powerful individuals holding senior positions inside governmental institutions. For instance, the BOSASA corruption case, which uncovered deeper levels of dishonesty and unethical behavior among the corporate and government leaders, was brought up in 2019 before the Zondo Commission. There was a ton of evidence of dubious corporate practices in relation to government contracts, despite some disputes about the claims of corruption (Daily Maverick, 2019).

Cockcroft (2012) claims that corruption in South African public administration has erupted and permeated all three spheres of government, driving up government spending and eroding the moral pillars of local communities. According to Palmer, Moodley

and Parnell (2017), backlogs in service delivery and acute shortages of utilities like power and water have been problems in places with high levels of corruption. The way in which service corruption is perceived or categorized in South African public administration may vary depending on the strategy or point of view taken. Most of the time, corruption is understood by ordinary people as well as by highly bureaucratic entities. The extent of unethical behavior that leads to the public's mistrust of service delivery is demonstrated by elected officials' abuse of their public positions.

Kawo and Torun (2020) reported that the difficult problems facing public organizations regarding how to use modern technology to combat corruption and unethical behavior have been resolved thanks to the growth of technology through e-governance in the South African Public Administration. DiSalvo (2015:271) notes the growing demand for democratic participation in the nation's governance, which drives public sector employees to reduce corruption because the public has a say in how public policy is decided. In addition to unethical behavior, Fourie and Malan (2020) assert that public trust in state institutions indicates several accountability deficiencies that need to be addressed to improve the efficiency of public institutions in South Africa. Public administration and service delivery are at danger due to a lack of openness, public accountability, and ethical behavior. As a result, Madonsela's address from 2010 denounced corruption in all its forms.

Approximately 13 municipalities in KwaZulu-Natal experienced a downward spiral between 2015 and 2016 as a result of noncompliance, ineffective leadership, subpar financial reporting, and general noncompliance with the AG's recommendations, according to the analysis of the AG Report (2018:14) on KwaZulu-Natal municipalities. Numerous studies carried out in South Africa concentrated on the misuse of public positions for private gain but omitted to critically examine the causes of unethical and corrupt practices by public officials. Most of the time, corruption involves the use of a powerful position for one's own gain. Public offices have become corrupt hotspots that are unable to provide the public with goods and services due to the misappropriation of public funds for individual and strategic advantage (Porter & Graycar, 2016).

Who will oversee the corrupt public sector, though, is still an open topic. Despite what some may claim,

current law is always susceptible to manipulation by dishonest and unscrupulous public officials. Considering the White Paper for Local Government (1998) and other legal requirements, this essay makes the case that curbing corruption and unethical behavior among public employees can make the South African Public Administration an effective service provider.

## **7. Methods for Enhancing Good Governance in Public Departments of South Africa**

Recent social and economic developments have raised awareness of the importance of good governance in attaining social and economic growth.

### **7.1 Participation**

Due to the "participatory" character of good governance, boards and businesses must become more equal and diverse. They must actively engage in the business decision-making process; they cannot be passive partners. This also applies to the diverse board members and staff. Diversity on the board itself also fosters better thinking, even though the board may play a significant role in fostering diversity. But beware of hollow gestures; it is impossible to overstate the importance of transparency in good governance. Strong, balanced boards consider and value the viewpoints of people with a variety of talents, skills, perspectives, and capacities. Board chairs must conduct meetings in a way that encourages the participation of all board directors if they are dedicated to upholding excellent corporate governance principles. The participation of all board members is something that should be expected (Bezemer, Nicholson & Pugliese, 2018).

### **7.2 Consensus-Oriented**

The boardroom is an ideal location for holding engaging conversations and debates. The best decisions have been made following some of the most heated debates between individuals with different backgrounds and viewpoints. Good governance calls for achieving consensus because of these discussions. Consensus-oriented decision-making must consider the many needs and points of view of this varied group to reach a broad consensus that will serve the interests of communities and businesses the best.

### 7.3 Accountability

Accountability is a key element of effective governance, just as it is in many other areas of business and culture. The board of directors is accountable to the shareholders, stakeholders, vendors, employees, and members of the public among other groups and individuals. Transparency is one of the cornerstones of effective governance and it both encourages and exhibits accountability. Accountability and the rule of law go hand in hand.

### 7.4 Transparency

Good corporate governance requires openness to shareholders and stakeholders as well as transparency. Financial records cannot be inflated or embellished. Reporting that is simple to read and understand should be given to shareholders and stakeholders. Important business contracts must be disclosed to all parties, including those who may, if necessary, react to questions and give justifications for reporting. Corporations should provide readers with a clear knowledge of the issues in their reports by including enough details.

### 7.5 Responsiveness

Unexpected crises and scandals can all too frequently divert attention in the business world. Businesses with sound governance processes are often able to prioritize open, honest communication with shareholders and other stakeholders. Prompt responsiveness to the unexpected is crucial.

### 7.6 Effectiveness and Efficiency

In their capacities as planners and overseers, board members are responsible for doing their tasks correctly and effectively. When fulfilling their tasks and responsibilities, many firms consider the environment. The need for excellent governance could be used as the impetus for a company to change from manual paper processes to more environmentally friendly technological solutions, such as the integrated suite of board leadership and collaboration tools.

### 7.7 Equity and Inclusiveness

At the board table, each board director has an equal place. Each director should use their voice to add to and widen debates by sharing their experiences, beliefs, and philosophies. Nobody should ever feel

excluded or as though their opinions are less important than others'. This same philosophy ought to permeate your whole company, with a diversity and inclusion culture supporting every aspect of how you do business. DEI (diversity, equality, and inclusion) are essential components of effective governance.

### 7.8 Rule of Law

Boards should work together and reach decisions in a fair and impartial manner in conformity with the rule of law. Boards may occasionally be obliged to consult outside counsel, outside direction, or outside experience from other parties. While making decisions on their own or in cooperation with outside parties, boards must conduct themselves with the utmost morality, honesty, and integrity.

### 7.9 Strategic Vision

One of the key responsibilities of the board of directors is strategic planning, which includes the goal, vision, and values statements of the firm. To understand the goals and methods of an organization, boards use strategic planning. Good corporate governance requires a detailed planning process that includes action plans, budgets, operating plans, analysis, reporting, and much more. Board members are held responsible for their actions and for keeping track of their objectives under the strategic plan. Strategic planning gives government a chance to put many of the good governance ideas they promote into practice because it also addresses risk management and preserving the company's reputation (Jan, Lai & Tahir, 2021).

## 8. Conclusion and Recommendations

To counteract the effects of poor service delivery and poor management of public firms, the South African government must embrace values and ethics. For public services to be effective, values and ethics must be adopted (Sindane, 1999). According to De Gruchy and Prozensky (1991), South Africa has a very rich and diversified religious, scholarly, and philosophical culture that is beneficial to public leadership. Religious ethics may influence development if they are accepted in the public sphere. But this can be up for debate. Upholding ethics in public administration improves services and boosts citizens' standards of living. This essay argues that through acting morally, every organization can attain successful governance.



Without the observation of ethics, examples of poor management, corruption, and financial misuse happen, which jeopardizes the integrity of public organizations. The analyzed materials revealed a pattern of unethical behavior that included public employees doing business with the private sector and abusing the public procurement system. When this occurs, there's a chance that the immoral and corrupt actions of some persons in power would reflect poorly on South Africa's public administration.

The past two years have seen a rise in unethical behavior and multiple cases of corruption at the highest echelons of government in South Africa, as revealed through commissions of inquiry reviews. The study of how to apply ethics and moral principles to good governance in public institutions is therefore lacking.

Enforcing the moral code among public employees necessitates cooperation and an atmosphere of goodwill when laws are enforced and adherence to them is not only a prerogative but also a necessity to improve public service delivery. Accountability and transparency remain the best weapons available to public managers in this situation for thwarting unethical state capture and other corruption-related activities. To promote trust, enhance service delivery, and manage performance in public institutions, including the public, this topic recommends public managers in South African Public Administration to respect ethics.

## 9. Scope for Further Research

For decision-makers in Public Administration and all branches of government, this kind of research is very useful. Government agencies frequently engage in unethical behavior; thus decision-makers must develop strong plans to protect the public interest. But because this research is conceptual, it may be viewed as a comprehensive overview of important moral problems facing the public sector. To generalize the ethical issues encountered throughout the nation, an empirical study using a cross case analysis of ethical challenges and a sample of many public institutions in South African Public Administration would be helpful. The National Development Plan 2030 aims to produce 100 PhDs per million per year, but it doesn't clarify where to place those PhDs. There is the need to fill this gap by future researchers in promoting good governance in South Africa.

Therefore, additional study can empirically analyze the rise in ethical violations in the public sector to lessen the consequences on the economy and to develop procedures to reclaim the proceeds of unethical activity in the public sector.

## 10. Practical Implications for Scholars and Practitioners

Corruption and unethical behavior in South African public administration cause a variety of problems with service delivery. Public administration in South Africa requires ethical leaders to promote integrity, accountability, and openness in the discharge of public tasks considering the rising corruption-related challenges in public procurement systems. To improve service delivery in a developing state, compliance with the ethical standards and legal requirements controlling the operation of the public institution is now a need. As a result, this paper responds to calls from academics to address the unethical behavior of government officials in South African public administration, who are primarily in charge of ensuring the efficient use of public funds and the delivery of services generally. To attain an efficient public administration, the South African government can use this research to help them implement strategic policies and whistle blowing systems to find corruption and unethical behavior.

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# Mitigating Factors of Qualified Audit Opinion in Local Municipalities in South Africa

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**Abstract:** This current qualitative study investigated mitigating factors of qualified audit opinion in a South African local municipality. A qualified audit opinion is one of the characteristics of poor municipal performance. In general, the qualified audit opinion results from the inability to perform certain audit procedures, and no additional steps can be done to generate the necessary level of trustworthy audit evidence. As a result, qualified audit opinion is becoming more common in municipalities where there is a scope limitation. The problem that motivated this study was the authors' belief that qualified audit opinion paint a worrying picture of municipalities with poor audit outcomes. Qualitative data were collected through 11 semi-structured e-interviews with audit committee, chief financial officer, divisional managers, audit manager and internal auditors in a local municipality, in South Africa to explore factors that are responsible for a qualified audit opinion. The study found that the underlying causes of qualified audit opinion were identified as the major hurdles to achieving a better audit opinion within the municipality due to different interpretations of Generally Recognised Accounting Practices (GRAP), lack of proper implementation of internal controls, instability key staff vacancies, poor records management, insufficient or inadequate audit evidence, lack of financial statement quality, capacity constraints, insufficient monitoring and corrective action, lack of accountability and effective consequences management and previous audit findings and recommendations that are not corrected. This study demonstrates that the qualified audit opinion is influenced by many factors, and often implicitly and explicitly related to the accounting and organizational policies and procedures. Therefore, it is important to have clear and rigorous management of audit activities to ensure that the instances of qualified opinion are minimized. The study recommends the introduction of formal discussions of drivers affecting municipalities because it will assist the municipality in following up on audit findings, recommendations and results. It will also assist officials in holding internal audit reports accountable and positively implementing the Auditor-General of South Africa (AGSA) recommendations. Quality assurance procedures must be followed, and management and internal audit must work together to maintain accountability through constructive engagements, strategic planning and good governance. Financial mismanagement should be investigated, and effective consequence management implemented.

**Keywords:** Qualified and unqualified audit opinion, Audited financial statements, Modified audit opinion, Audit quality

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## 1. Introduction

In the last ten years, there have been important calls to have municipalities change in the quality of financial reporting. One of the topics mostly addressed in the financial statements audit and financial reporting literature is modified audit opinion, which is recognised as not "the best" audit outcome. The modified audit opinion is influenced by a range of variables relating to compliance, performance and the quality of financial statements reporting (Dewi, Azam & Yusoff, 2019). This has led to the study to explore issues of non-compliance with GRAP; lack of proper implementation of internal controls; lack of quality standards of annual financial statements; and poor records management, which all make up the so-called modified audit opinion.

Many public sector organisations, including municipalities, receive revised audit opinions from external auditors almost every year. According to scholars such as Pamungkas, Ibtida and Avrian (2018), the low quality of financial statements is one factor that leads to municipalities receiving a qualified audit opinion. Audit reports are used to effectively communicate the state of financial reporting (Suwanda, 2015), in an effort by the independent auditor to provide an audit opinion on the financial statements' transparency to those parties that depend on them (Fu, Carson & Simnett, 2015). Thus, audit opinions are issued to South African municipalities to offer details regarding the financial performance municipalities and condition, and compliance with laws and guidelines (AGSA, 2016-17).



Literature indicates that the difficulties of lacking authority, financial administrations and governance are critical factors influencing financial statement presentation in local municipalities as they progress towards achieving unqualified audit outcomes (Alrshah, 2015; Mbua, 2016; Motubatse, 2016; Ncgobo & Malefane, 2017). Furthermore, as observed by existing literature, local government accountability can be achieved through effective leadership, good governance practices (Pfisterer, 2017) and efficient financial management (Eze & Harrison, 2013).

Clean audit results are the primary indicator of a well-functioning or clean organisation within the public sector (Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA), 2009). Many publications, including those by Deloitte (2012) and the National Treasury (2014), define the process of obtaining unqualified audit opinions in municipalities. Unqualified audit opinions are an indication of a municipality's quality of the audit and the reliability of its business procedures (Stamatović, Maksimović & Sućeska, 2020). Section 166(1) of Finance Management Act (MFMA) (2003) mandates the formation of an audit committee in each municipality. According to section 165(1) of MFMA (2003), internal audit units are required in every municipality and municipal entity. Internal audit department and audit committee are crucial in giving the municipal manager an unbiased assessment of the efficiency of municipal processes and controls (Matlala & Uwizeyimana, 2020).

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

All governmental organs are required to offer a system of governance that fosters accountability under section 1(d) of Constitution of Republic of South Africa – RSA (1996). In terms of section 151(1) of the Constitution, municipalities, which must be constituted throughout the entire republic, make up the local sphere of governance (RSA, 1996). According to section 18(1) of the Municipal Structures Act – MSA (1998), there must be a municipal council in every municipality. The MEC for Local Government in the relevant province appoints a number of council members to the municipal council through notice in the Provincial Gazette (section 18(3) of the MSA, 1998). Section 4(1) of Municipal Systems Act (2000) describes the rights of municipal councils. In terms of section 60 of MFMA (2003), in a municipality, the municipality's accounting officer is the manager of the municipality. According to

section 82(1), a municipal council must appoint: (a) a municipal manager who serves as the municipality's head of administration and accounting officer; and (b) an acting municipal manager when needed (MSA, 1998).

Section 77 (1) of the MFMA (2003) mandate the chief financial officer, the accounting officer, all senior managers tasked with overseeing the municipality's votes and to whom section 79 has granted authority and responsibilities, and any additional senior officials nominated by the accounting officer comprise the more senior levels of a municipality's administrative hierarchy.

According to section 121(1) of MFMA (2003) every municipality and every municipal entity shall prepare an annual report in accordance with this chapter for each fiscal year, in addition, the council of a municipality shall, pursuant to section 129, deal with the annual report of the municipality and of any municipal entity under the municipality's sole or shared control within nine months of the end of a fiscal year. MFMA No. 56 of 2003, mandates the submission of yearly financial statements by municipalities to AGSA within three months of the end of their financial year, on 30 June. Thus, the submission deadline is on 31 August of each year (or 30 September for consolidated financial statements). The Financial statements that are presented for auditing must not contain any significant errors (MFMA, 2003). The limited scope justifies the issuance of a qualified audit opinion (Zaid Alkilani, Wan Hussin & Salim, 2020).

The following sections of Constitution contain the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs' (CoGTA) mandates: Section 139(1) of RSA (1996) stipulates province involvement in municipal governance, reporting that relevant provincial executive may step in when a municipality is unable or refuses to fulfil an executive obligation under the terms of the Constitution or legislation, this includes (a) issuing a directive to the Municipal Council outlining the extent of the municipality's failure to fulfil its obligations and outlining any necessary steps to meet its obligations under section (b) and (c).

According to section 165(1) of MFMA (2003), an internal audit unit is required in every municipality and municipal organization subject to subsection (3). Section 165(2) states that the internal audit unit of a municipality or municipal entity must:

"(a) prepare a risk-based audit plan and an internal audit programme for each financial year; (b) advise the accounting officer and report to the audit committee on its own plan on issues pertaining to: (i) internal audit, (ii) internal control, (iii) accounting procedures and practices; risk and risk management; performance management; loss control; and compliance with this Act, the annual Division of Revenue Act and any other applicable legislation; and (c) to carry out any other tasks allocated by the accounting officer" (MFMA, 2003:152). The Public Audit Act, No. 25 of 2004 (PAA), was established (a) to implement the Constitution's provisions creating an Auditor-General (AG) and giving it the supreme auditing authority; (b) to establish procedures for public sector audits of organisations and accounting firms; and (c) to facilitate the establishment of an oversight mechanism subject to section 10 (3)(i) to support and protect the AG in order to uphold the AG's impartiality, independence, dignity and efficacy; and (ii) to counsel the National Assembly.

### 3. Literature Review

#### 3.1 Root Causes and Drivers of Qualified Audit Opinion

According to International Standards of Auditing (ISA 705), a qualified audit opinion is expressed when the auditor determines that misstatements, whether made separately or collectively, are significant but not widespread to financial statements after obtaining adequate audit evidence, or when the auditor is unable to obtain adequate audit evidence to form an opinion (IFAC, 2015). The MFMA (2003) sets out its primary objectives as to acquire reliable financial management in three domains of government and for them to spearhead these reforms and policies. A literature review was conducted to obtain material relating to the root causes and the drivers of the qualified audit opinion, challenges that prevent better audit outcomes and factors to be considered to obtain unqualified audit outcomes.

According to the AGSA (2016-17) the auditees' persistent inability main root causes, as stated in their report: management (including senior management and accounting officers), executive powers and supervisory frameworks (including portfolio committees, Scopa, and committees for public accounting in provinces) did not respond to our communications regarding risk reduction

and enhanced internal control with the appropriate urgency. Pamungkas et al. (2018) conducted the research to determine whether the standards used to create an audit opinion had a significant impact on the financial statements of the municipal government's audit opinion in Indonesia. The later has discovered that weaknesses in internal control structure, non-adherence to laws and regulations, failure to adhere to accounting norms, a weakness in the accounting and reporting controlling system, as well as a shortcoming in the controlling system of revenue and expenditure budget realisation could lead to an entity getting an audit opinion that is qualified. Internal controls refer to the process designed for risk assessment by organisation's board of directors, management, and other staff members to offer a fair level of assurance over the accomplishment of goals in terms of operational effectiveness and efficiency, the accuracy of financial reporting, and adherence to legal and regulatory requirements (US Committee of Sponsoring Organization of Treadway Commission (COSO), 1992).

#### 3.2 A Different Interpretation of GRAP

In terms of MFMA (2003), financial statements must be done in compliance with GRAP. In most circumstances, a specific GRAP/GAMAP standard dictates the accounting methodology to a transaction or occurrence, but if no such standard exists, the framework aids management in creating financial statements that accurately reflect the municipality's financial affairs (PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC), 2016). The PWC (2016) further ascribes to the accounting framework as the foundation for financial reporting and accounting in general. It creates the foundation for establishing which events should be recorded, how they should be quantified and the format in which they should be conveyed to financial statement users and may thus be used to evaluate new and current transactions and events. Therefore, for management to meet the MFMA's requirements, the current GRAP/GAMAP Standards should be used to make and present financial statements.

#### 3.3 Lack of Proper Implementation of Internal Controls

Internal controls are the procedures created by a company's management, board of directors, and other staff members to offer a reasonable level of assurance regarding the attainment of goals in

terms of financial reporting accuracy, operational effectiveness and efficiency, and adherence to legal and regulatory requirements (Kewo & Afiah, 2017). According to Oseifuah (2015), the processes include: (1) creating an environment of favourable control, (2) carrying out risk assessments, (3) improving communication and information sharing inside the organization, (4) designing and implementing control activities in the form of policies and procedures. According to Oseifuah (2015), the criteria for evaluating organisations' internal control are: (1) creating a conducive environment for control, (2) carrying out risk assessments, (3) enhancing information and communication inside the organization, (4) creating and putting into practice control activities in the form of policies and procedures, and (5) overseeing the efficacy of control-related policies and procedures on an ongoing basis.

According to the participants, the root cause of qualified audit opinion in Polokwane Local Municipality is a lack of fully implemented internal controls, the dependence of the municipality on consultants, a lack of monitoring of process of annual financial statements and failure to implement the recommendations of internal audit and the AGSA. Noteworthy is the fact that internal auditors and audit manager had the same perspective.

### 3.4 Poor Records Management

According to Musembe (2016), record keeping is critical to business management. Amoah-Mensah (2023) recognises record-keeping characteristics such as record identification, categorization, protection and storage, receiving and transmission, retention, and disposal for financial statement preparation. According to Tsabedze and Ngoepe (2020) good records management controls creation and development of records to minimize working expenses, increase proficiency and productivity, absorb new management of records advances and ensure administrative consistency. According to Abdul-Rahamon and Adejare (2014), the two main objectives of accounting and bookkeeping are to gather the financial data required to complete various tax returns and to monitor income and expenses to increase the likelihood of turning a profit. According to Kgobe and Mamokhere (2021), the main focus of an auditor is the lack of accountability and good governance. This means inadequate evidence to support the auditing procedure constitutes insufficient responsibility and absence of

governance within an organization.

### 3.5 Lack of Quality Standards of Annual Financial Statements

Municipalities are annually required to prepare financial statements, subject to section 122(1) of MFMA (2003). According to Robinson (2020), financial statements are a collection of accounting reports that together describe an organisation's financial position and recent operations. Martínez-Ferrero (2014) defines financial reporting quality as the accuracy of information presented during the financial reporting process. Financial reporting can be seen as the summary of municipalities' performance measured by their capacity in raising, handling and using public money (Khanyile, 2016). Financial reporting is the final product of the accounting process (Suwanda, 2015). However, for Schroeder, Clark and Cathey (2022), contend financial reporting is not merely the result; rather, each step of the process matters, including the disclosure of the organization's choice of transactions, the application of accounting rules, and the understanding of the decisions taken.

All participants expressed their opinions on what they believe are the drivers of qualified audit opinions in the Polokwane Local Municipality. They generally define qualified audit opinions as situations in which financial statements were not done and presented fairly in every way that matters and without relevant laws and procedures. This is consistent with Ndlovana (2022), which states that at the end of the fiscal year, financial statements must accurately report the municipality's financial situation, performance in comparison to the budget, and management of income, expenses, assets, and liabilities. The significance of this theme was that it shed light on the significance of quality financial reporting in municipal government.

## 4. Research Design and Methodology

### 4.1 Research Design

A research design is a group of rules and directions to be adhered to in taking care of research problems, which involves settling on a few choices and taking various steps (Mouton, 2014). However, the general choice is to select a study plan that is in line with research objectives. The current study used a qualitative research design to produce a top-to-bottom understanding of mitigating factors

of qualified audit opinion in Local Municipalities in South Africa. The study followed single case design with the context being local government at district level and the intrinsic single case was the Polokwane Local Municipality.

The research paradigm for the study was interpretative because the authors preferred qualitative methods for data collection. Researchers who utilise interpretivist paradigms and qualitative methods frequently look for encounters, rather than relying on a large number of insights, people's perceptions and understandings of reality might be shown through their information (Davies & Fisher, 2018).

#### 4.2 Research Methods and Data Collection

In the first phase, the study reviewed policy documents, relevant legislation and the AGSA's municipal annual reports for the period 2015/16 to 2019/20, followed by semi-structured e-interviews. The study uses an explanatory qualitative approach as it widens and develops our understanding of how things come into existence in our social world (Yin, 2009).

Following similar methods of prior studies (Dahlin, 2021; Fritz & Vandermause, 2018; Hawkins, 2018), email interviews assist qualitative researchers with more suitable options than face-to-face interviews with participants. The use of email interviews in a qualitative study is becoming an effective way of data collection (Fritz & Vandermause, 2018). Hawkins (2018) points to the potential advantages of technology, time, travel costs, and different geographical areas with the use of email interviews. Data were collected through e-interviews using Computer-Mediated Communications (CMCs). Participants received an email with the interview guide and consent forms. Email-based research interviews were conducted at the convenience of participants. Participants could also answer to the written interview guiding questions via email. Because a semi-structured interview approach was followed, the authors were able to ask follow-up questions about the research topic. The questionnaire contains 9 questions and 15 probing questions.

#### 4.3 Population and Sample Size

The employees from municipality's finance department were selected to participate in the study. Purposive and snowball sampling were taken into consideration when choosing the participants

to meet the study's principal objective. The two non-probability samples were chosen based on its appropriateness to achieve the study objectives. Purposive sampling was chosen because the study was based on a list of respondents who were chosen because they met the study's criteria. The flexibility of the snowball sampling method's sample criteria enabled the authors to interview more study participants who were not initially selected but, later turned out to be knowledgeable about the audit opinions.

#### 4.4 Participants Targeted

Braun and Clarke (2021) state that a size of 5 to 25 is considered acceptable to obtain adequate data. The authors intended to use 15 respondents who met the criteria outlined and were chosen through purposive sampling from the finance department, but due to the Covid-19 lockdown, people working from home and the fear of providing information to a stranger, only 11 responses were received.

The process of data collection lasted for six months due to Covid-19 regulations, geographical space, the availability of participants and their individual work responsibility. In accordance with the practice in qualitative research, email interviews may take days, weeks, or months (Fritz & Vandermause, 2018) depending on the availability of sampled population recruited in the criteria. Table 1 on the next page presents the inclusion criteria of participants.

#### 4.5 Data Analysis

The qualitative approach of document analysis highlights the themes and meanings of a document. This study began with, and was directed by, an existing literature review and analysis of the main drivers of qualified audit opinion in the Local Municipalities in South Africa. The most common way of gathering and examining the literature started in March 2020 with an exhaustive analysis of the documents and reports produced by the AGSA for South African Local Municipalities, which included websites, reports and management letters. These documents were used to confirm information from other sources, including AGSA reports, policies and circulars. The data were then sorted into groups and themes based on the discovered themes. An inductive data analysis technique was applied to describe the meanings of essential themes and divide the data into manageable units and patterns.



**Table 1: Population and Sampling**

Respondent(s)	Number of Respondents	Reason for Inclusion
Audit committee member	1	A minimum of 1 respondent was sufficient to provide an understanding of the root causes of the qualified audit opinion. Audit committee is mandated to oversee activities of audit by MFMA and audit committee charter. (To obtain a detailed amount of information from respondents for analysis, a small population size was chosen).
Chief financial officer	1	A minimum of 1 respondent was sufficient to provide an understanding of the root causes of the qualified audit opinion.
Divisional managers and their assistants	7	A minimum of 7 respondents were sufficient. Managers were responsible for the operation of their units, which were subjected to audit every year by the AGSA. (To obtain their opinions on the root causes of the qualified audit opinion).
Internal auditor	2	A minimum of 1 respondent was sufficient to provide an understanding of the root causes of the qualified audit opinion. Internal auditor was responsible for performing an internal audit activity in the municipality to support the council and municipal manager in achieving their goals.

Source: Authors

The authors reviewed the e-interviews written answers and used Atlas.ti. and an independent coder to identify themes and sub-themes, as well as the explicit and implicit meanings in the participants' responses. After this, the authors compared the replies from the different types of participants to the themes found in the data and connected the sub-themes to the ones that arose from the literature review.

The data were then analysed and coded systematically. The Word document answers were loaded into Atlas.ti's Project Hermeneutic Unit Version 22. The authors used open coding to categorise the data based on the participant groups, which are referred to as "code groups" in the Atlas.ti setting. In addition, the authors used axial coding (a coding list with pre-defined prefixes) to connect the 103 themes and sub-themes to distinct "code groups". The research questions influenced the axial coding, which was completed while the researcher read through the interview written responses several times. As a result of this approach, the authors were able to code anything they thought was significant from the document and place it into project units. In this approach, the phrases that were deemed important based on the views of the participants on qualified audit opinions were coded using descriptive coding.

The authors coded in cycles (Saldaña, 2021), using the methods described above, until the codes were refined. As previously stated, an independent coder was also used to corroborate the coding for the purposes of rigour and qualitative research criteria. Following the completion of the authors' own refined code list, they deliberated on the independent coder's coding and reports. Codes and categories were used for creating themes for a qualitative enquiry into the themes stated in Table 1. All e-interviews were analysed to ensure accuracy and consistency. Each participant's responses were documented into common themes. The response results are a very thorough and accurate classification of all participant's responses.

## 5. Results and Discussion

The findings of qualitative study were based on interviews and related information the themes that were identified through interview guiding questions. They were then compared across participants to identify similarities.

The interview guiding questions had open-ended questions to encourage the participants to describe their views of qualified audit opinion in their own words. Probing questions were used to enhance the open-ended question. The purpose of the probing

**Table 2: Themes and Sub-Themes Used For Presentation of Results**

Themes				
Root causes of qualified audit opinion	Drivers of qualified audit opinion	Challenges preventing better audit opinion	Implications on municipality and community	Supports to improve municipal audit outcomes
Sub-Themes				
Different interpretation of GRAP.	Poor records management.	Lack of accountability and effective consequence management.	Impact of modified audit opinion on community.	Municipal improvements administrative advice.
Lack of proper implementation of internal controls.	Insufficient or inadequate audit evidence.	AGSA findings and recommendation dominates.	Impact of modified audit opinion on municipality.	Oversight mechanism.
Instability key staff vacancies.	Lack of quality of annual financial statements.			
	Capacity constraints.			
	Insufficient monitoring and corrective actions.			

Source: Authors

questions was to understand how participants understood factors of qualified audit opinion and to further reflect upon their experiences in the local municipality.

The following questions were asked.

Key interview question – what are the root causes of qualified audit opinion in the Local Municipality?

(KCs) – represents key codes  
 ("") – represent quotations'

**Audit Committee:**

*"Well, the interpretation gap between the municipality and AGSA relates to accounting policies, especially on asset classifications. Now AGSA has determined that the accounting standard is not being applied properly by the municipality. We will have to discuss and agree on these accounting frameworks". (Key codes (KCs)). "My understanding is that AGSA found that the municipality financial statements were not prepared in compliance with section 122(1) of the MFMA in all significant aspects. In other words, there are gaps in the interpretation of GRAP Standards".*

Drawing from the above participants' responses, their experiences, and understanding of the root causes of qualified audit opinion results from **different interpretations of GRAP (theme 1)**. Participants attributed the root causes of qualified audit opinion with GRAP that are interpreted differently, and according to Martinez-Ferrero (2014), this can affect the quality of financial statements. Otherwise, these views are building towards the strength of accounting policy. This finding is supported by the study of Pamungkas et al. (2018) which discovered that deviation from accounting standards and vulnerability in the reporting and accounting control system could lead to an entity receiving a qualified audit opinion.

Therefore, compliance with GRAP is intended to provide confirmation that financial statements have been produced using GRAP guidelines, ensuring transparency in municipal financial management and administration. It is recommended that accountants use GRAP because it will change the format of financial statements and principles in order to restate and regroup the content of some comparative figures.

Probing interview question 1 – what do you think could improve the municipality's audit findings?

### Audit Committee:

*"I think the municipality should deal with and manage the... " Senior management's sluggishness in putting action plans into place to address audit findings". (Key Codes (KCs)). For example, "Management fails to take appropriate and efficient measures to stop erratic spending as well as unnecessary and wasteful spending"; this also led to a qualified audit opinion in the municipality".*

### Internal Audit:

The response to the probing question by the internal audit participants contained several issues and are elaborated based on their experiences and interactions they have with the internal control and the municipality processes during the audit. The participants described how they experienced the behaviour of management in the audit process and how such behaviours led to poor audit outcomes.

*Participant 1. "Management tends to only attend to AGSA during the audit process during the time of the audit rather than managing internal control environment during course of the year". (Key codes (KCs))*

*"The main root cause is poor implementation and monitoring of internal controls. The municipality has sound policies and procedure manuals to serve as guidelines for various processes. However, those internal controls are not fully implemented".*

*"Use of consultants – the use of consultants was very rife in the municipality, and most of the consultants did not understand the business processes of municipality".*

*"Lack of proper management of AFS process plan – the municipality develops a very sound AFS process plan with defined activities and timelines; however, activities are not performed within the required timelines and reasons for such are not provided and/or adequate".*

*"Poor diagnosis of the root cause results in an uninformed action plan to address the audit findings".*

From the excerpts, the participants did not only offer a description of the solution to the municipality to improve audit outcomes based on their

experiences. Some offered an analysis of the problems of the municipality. The examples presented above excerpts illustrate the **proper implementation of internal control (Theme 2)**. For example, the participants understood the procedures that auditors perform to understand the organisation they are auditing including determining and evaluating the material misstatements risks. According to participants, root cause of qualified audit opinion in Local Municipality is a lack of fully implemented internal controls, municipality relying on consultants, a lack of monitoring of process of annual financial statements and failure to implement recommendations of both internal and external audit. Participant's responses reminded us of the study by Peterson (2018) who points out that policies have a meaningful effect on governance quality and a direct impact on the effectiveness of internal controls. Municipalities with audit committees must report stronger and improved financial performance (Fitzgerald & Giroux, 2014). Therefore, the implementation of internal control is a crucial aspect to improve audit outcomes of municipality. It is recommended that municipality's leadership should adhere to the COSO criteria, which include creating a supportive environment for controls, carrying out risk assessments, distributing information and communicating effectively throughout the organization, creating and putting into practice control activities in the form of policies and procedures, and carrying out continuous evaluations of the efficiency of control-related policies and procedures.

Probing interview question 3 – what challenges prevent the municipality from obtaining a better audit opinion?

As a follow-up question, the participants were further asked to provide challenges based on their experiences. The main issues highlighted by these participants were challenges that prevent the municipality from getting a better audit outcome.

### Audit Committee:

*"Lack of quality AFS". (Key codes (KCs))*

*"The financial statement submitted for audit included material misstatements". (KCs)*

*"Poor disclosure of irregular expenditure disclosure notes". (KCs)*

*"Again, I see that most of the time, the irregular expenditure that has been disclosed is incomplete and inaccurate, and that on its own provides a basis for a qualified opinion. Majority of irregular expenditure was caused by supply chain management guidelines being disregarded". (KCs)*

*"It is a known fact that municipalities are struggling to complete and submit AFS for audits on time, and that is a difficult reality". (KCs)*

### Internal Audit:

The participant responded that they do recognize challenges, and they started to tell that time is the main problem that makes municipality get qualified opinion from audit of financial statements.

*"Lack of proper management of AFS process plan – the municipality develops a very sound AFS process plan with defined activities and timelines. However, activities are not performed within the required timelines and reasons for such are not provided and/or adequate".*

The participants indicated that the **quality standards of annual financial statements (Theme 3)** are a problem and that they do not match the quality of the Municipal GRAP reporting framework for presentation of annual financial statements.

The main issues highlighted by these participants were concerns relating to audit evidence; the lack of proper supporting documents to support figures in annual financial statements. This point back to the Theme 2 raised on the poor financial internal control systems. Raweh, Kamardin and Malik (2019) purport that the timeliness of financial reporting is important, and that late submission is an indication of poor audit quality, and it may lead to a negative audit opinion about fairness of financial information. Therefore, the municipalities are required to file annual financial statements in time to avoid any qualified audit opinions (Edmonds, Leece, Vermeer & Vermeer, 2020).

Participants mentioned that the poor implementation of audit findings drives the negative audit opinion. The one participant was dissatisfied with the processes and commented that inconsistent actions created a culture of "no consequences" and that these challenges could be overcome if accountability and responsibility are prioritised. Since good governance is the responsibility of every manager

in a municipality, the introduction of formal discussions of drivers affecting municipalities is recommended because it will assist the municipality in following up on audit findings, recommendations, and results. It will also assist officials in holding internal audit reports accountable and positively implementing the auditor-general's recommendations. Quality assurance procedures must be followed, and management and the internal audit must work together to maintain accountability through constructive engagements, strategic planning and good governance.

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Throughout the literature, the authors were able to comprehend the current literature and discussions pertaining to qualified audit opinions and to gain understanding of key ideas, research strategies, and practical experimentation methods by various authors in the field of auditing. The objectives were achieved because of the authors' better understanding of real-world problems and the study findings presented and discussed in this study. The interviews revealed that the qualified audit opinion has been a major problem, with specific audit issues affecting the financial statements, including different interpretations of GRAP (associated with asset classification, interpretation gaps and non-compliance with standards), instability in key staff vacancies (associated with inadequacies of the administration and business processes not well coordinated) and a lack of suitable implementation of internal controls (relating to no prevention of irregular expenditure and slow response to audit action plans). Therefore, from the narrative of the literature on the analysis of the empirical results, the study concluded that the drivers responsible for the qualified audit opinion are poor record management, insufficient or inadequate audit evidence, a lack of quality of annual financial statements, capacity constraints and insufficient monitoring and corrective actions.

An investigation into the effectiveness of municipal councils' oversight role as the political organisation of a municipality is necessary. Given that municipalities operate in a climate of political competition and public bargaining. A study of municipal leadership effectiveness in relation to the political structure's ability to make sound decisions could be conducted. The authors recognise the significance of political will in improving municipal financial performance and accountability.



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# Evaluating the Effectiveness and Fairness of the Employee Performance Management Development System (EPMDS) at the Department of Government Communication and Information System (GCIS)

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**Abstract:** This study examines whether the Employee Performance Management and Development System (EPMDS) in the Department of Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) is effectively and fairly implemented. The introduction of the EPMDS within the South African public sector is meant to enhance the performance of public servants and the effectiveness of the public service to improve the quality of public service delivery. In this study, the research method followed was quantitative in nature and utilised the GCIS as a case study. The major finding of the study suggests that the implementation of the EPMDS in the GCIS does not effectively enhance the performance of public servants due to the inadequate training of managers and supervisors as implementers of the system. The study concludes that the continuous training of supervisors and managers on the implementation of the Employee Performance Management and Development System may positively contribute towards realising its objective of enhancing the performance of public servants within the public service. Based on the views of the participants of this study, the EPMDS is a good system that can achieve the desired results if correctly and fairly implemented. As a custodian of the EPMDS, it is suggested that the Department of Public Service and Administration put in place monitoring mechanisms to ensure that the system serves its purpose.

**Keywords:** Performance, Monitoring, Development, Appraisal, Standards, Effective, Implementation

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## 1. Introduction

Two types of Performance Management and Development Systems (PMDS) exist in the South African public service. The first is a national performance management system for the members of the Senior Management Service (SMS) which consists of Heads of Departments (HODs), Director Generals (DGs), Deputy Director General (DDGs), Chief Directors and Directors at provincial and national departments (Harris, 2022). The second is the Employee Performance Management and Development System (EPMDS) for employees below SMS levels (salary levels 1 to 12). The EPMDS was initially developed by the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) as a voluntary system for departments and provinces that may choose to adopt the system (DPSA, 2007:6). However, an amendment to the Public Service Regulations in 2016 (South Africa, 2016) made it mandatory for all government departments to have an effective and efficient PMDS for managing the performance of their employees.

It is significant to outline the regulatory framework for PMDSs in the public service. Section 195 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (South Africa, 1996) – hereafter referred to as the Constitution – stipulates that good human resource management and career development practices must be cultivated to maximise human potential. The Section further states that public administration must be broadly representative of the South African people, with employment and personnel management practices based on ability, objectivity, fairness, and the need to redress the imbalances of the past. In line with these constitutional provisions, the DPSA developed the following public service regulatory framework for the development and implementation of performance management systems in the public service:

- The Public Service Act 103 of 1994 (South Africa, 1994) provides for the organisation and administration of the public service of the Republic of South Africa, and for the regulation of the

conditions of employment, terms of office, discipline, retirement and discharge of members from public service.

- Section 13 of the 1995 White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service (DPSA, 1995) makes provision for the development of effective and lifelong career development paths for all categories of public servants through promotion and career advancement based on performance.
- Section 4.4.3 of the 1997 White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (DPSA, 1997) encourages that the performance of staff who deal with customers be regularly monitored, and that poor performance should not be tolerated. In terms of Section 5.2 of the White Paper (DPSA, 1997), the performance management procedures must include the assessment of the performance of individual staff to contribute in improving service to the public. This is essential for staff who serve the public directly, but it is also important for staff who provide direct services to their fellow public servants in their own department or in other departments. Section 7.2.8 of the same White Paper (DPSA, 1997) states that monitoring and reporting systems which enable senior management to check on progress and take remedial action where necessary are needed.
- As part of the public service's democratisation, the DPSA introduced the PMDS in the public service through the amendment of the existing Public Service Regulations (South Africa, 2001). The Public Service Regulations (South Africa, 2001) state that the performance of all members (SMS and below) should be managed through performance agreements. A manager must supervise and assess the subordinate's performance on a regular basis using the prescribed format of performance assessment. Further, the Executive Authority in national and provincial departments must establish an appropriate performance assessment instrument for the different occupational categories that should be used to decide on probation, rewards, promotion and skills development. Unsatisfactory performance must be managed by means of developing plans to improve an employee's performance through training (Mokoele, Masenya & Makalela, 2018:115-116).

- An amendment of the Public Service Regulations in 2016 (South Africa, 2016) makes it mandatory for all government departments to have an effective and efficient PMDS for managing the performance of their employees. Furthermore, Section 73 of the same regulation (South Africa, 2016) stipulates that those public servants who perform above expectation receive merit awards, while those who perform below expectation are provided with the necessary training and mentoring.

The problem statement of this study emanates from the documented failures in the implementation of the PMDS within the South African public service due to (a) poorly formulated performance agreements; (b) ineffective performance management; and (c) policy-related weaknesses (Public Service Commission, 2014). Similarly, the DPSA (2019) emphasises that inconsistencies in the implementation of the EPMDs by different departments has resulted in the payment of performance bonuses based on localised departmental schemes, rather than the actual overall performance of the organisation. Furthermore, it is assumed that the performance management system is fundamentally flawed at both organisational and individual levels because measurable performance standards are not set, and accountability has been eroded. Poor day-to-day management of performance by supervisors, including poor supervision, poor people management, and poor operations management contribute towards the failure of formal performance assessment. As a result, it is recommended that the PMDSs used in the public service be reviewed (National School of Government, 2022). The sections that follow outline the conceptualisation of the performance management system, the theory for this study, key requirements for the successful implementation of the EPMDs, the methodology followed in conducting the study, a presentation of the empirical results and the conclusion and recommendations.

## 2. Conceptualising Performance Management Systems

Performance is defined by Mwita (2000:19) as a multi-dimensional construct, of which the measurement varies and depends on a variety of factors that it comprises of. Mwita (2000) further argues that performance should be defined as the outcomes of work, because these outcomes provide the strongest



linkage to the strategic goals of the organisation, customer satisfaction and economic contributions. It is the opinion of Werner, Bagraim, Cunningham, Landman, Potgieter & Viedge (2011:117) that performance is what people say and do, and that all performance starts with a thought. For Armstrong (2009:23), performance is about doing work and the consequent results that are achieved. As a process, the EPMDS is not simply a once-a-year meeting to review the past year's performance and set goals for the next year. It is a process that involves a number of activities such as:

- The setting of goals.
- Preparing performance plans.
- Conducting reviews.
- Tracking behaviours.
- Gathering data.
- Writing evaluations (Gunaratne & du Plessis, 2007:17).

Mothae (2008:825) conceptualises performance management as the sum total of the performance of individual employees and teams within an organisation and includes the performance of organisational systems and sub-systems. This description relates to that of Van der Waldt (2012:217) who states that performance management focuses on individual employees and on the systems, processes, programmes of the organisation as a whole. It can therefore be argued that organisational performance within the public sector takes on a broader organisational perspective as far as the input (resources), processing (systems, procedures, methods, policies, administration), output (services and products), and outcomes (results of output) are concerned.

According to Armstrong (2009:95) performance management systems are a set of interrelated activities and processes that are treated as being holistically integrated and key components of the public service approach to managing performance of public servants through skills development and the capacitation of its human capital. Matshiqi (2007:6) adds that effective performance management involves the formal management process of directing, measuring, evaluating and rewarding

human effort, competence and talent, which are processes that work towards achieving the organisation's goals within a framework of core values. Noe, Hollenbeck, Gehart and Wright (2011:8) assert that performance management is a process through which managers can ensure that the activities and outputs of public servants are directed towards the attainment of organisational goals.

Additionally, performance management systems are not simply the appraisal of an individual's performance, rather these systems are integrated and continuous systems that develop, communicate and enable the future direction, core competencies and the values of an organisation by helping to create an achievable degree of understanding. Performance management systems ensure the development of and the effective carrying out of corporate, departmental, team and individual objectives and their associated performance appraisal systems; reward strategies and schemes; training and development strategies and plans; feedback, communication and coaching loops; individual career planning; and mechanisms for monitoring effectiveness and efficiency of these interventions (Esu & Inyang, 2009:100).

In the context of the South African public service, performance management is viewed as "a purposeful, continuous process aimed at managing and developing employee behaviour for the achievement of the organisation's strategic goals; the determination of the correct activities, and the evaluation and recognition of the execution of tasks or duties with the aim of enhancing their efficiency and effectiveness; and a means of improving results of the Department, its teams and individuals by managing performance within an agreed framework of planned goals, objectives, standards and incentives" (DPSA, 2007:6). The DPSA further describes a performance management system as "an authoritative framework for managing employee performance, which includes the policy framework as well as the framework relating to all aspects and elements in the performance cycle, including performance planning and agreement; performance monitoring, review and control; performance appraisal and moderating; and managing the outcomes of appraisal" (DPSA, 2007:6). The objectives of the performance management system used in the South African public service are:

- The establishment of a performance and learning culture in the Public Service.

- The improvement of service delivery.
- To ensure that all jobholders know and understand what is expected of them.
- The promotion of interactions about performance between jobholders and their supervisors.
- To identify, manage and promote jobholders' development needs.
- To evaluate performance fairly and objectively.
- To recognise categories of performance that are fully effective and better.
- The management of categories of performance that are not fully effective and lower than the set standard (DPSA, 2007:6).
- Clarity around goal orientation is a must. The more clarity there is when setting a goal for an employee, the less of a chance there is for its misunderstanding.
- Challenging or difficult goals turn out to be more effective. The belief is that when goal attainment presents a challenge, it leads to a higher level of motivation, which in turn leads to a higher chance of success.
- Employees need to have a certain level of buy-in and goal commitment, otherwise they are not going to have the necessary follow-through needed to succeed.
- In order for employees to successfully reach their goals, they need regular feedback from their managers, including feedback on their progress and where they can improve.

It can be deduced from the observations in this section that the performance management system is concerned with the attainment of organisational goals and good performance from employees. If implemented effectively, a performance management system is supposed to help an organisation achieve its goals and improve employee performance.

### 3. Theoretical Background: Goal-Setting Theory

This study is theoretically based on Locke and Latham's goal-setting theory (Indeed Editorial Team, 2022). Goal-setting theory is an employee engagement approach that involves setting specific and measurable goals to improve productivity. It is believed that organisations can improve employee performance and strengthen employee engagement by incorporating the goal-setting theory into the workplace. The theory posits that due to a growing sense of achievement, employees receive positive feedback from managers resulting in improved employee engagement, productivity, and satisfaction in the workplace (Indeed Editorial Team, 2022). From the goal-setting theory point of view, organisations that want to inspire higher performance in their employees should keep them motivated and moving towards their goals. Locke and Latham (Indeed.com, 2002) further expand on their theory by defining five key principles for effective goals:

- Complex or overwhelming goals tend to negatively impact employee motivation. Instead, leaders should break down large goals into smaller, more manageable tasks. When employees successfully complete these small tasks one at a time, it ultimately motivates them towards completing the larger goal (Debara, 2022).

Using goal-setting theory offers a host of benefits, including higher levels of engagement, higher levels of performance, better adherence to deadlines, wide application, support for a feedback culture, and self-efficacy (Debara, 2022). The goal-setting approach and its principles promote aspects of performance management such as agreeing on specific goals and objectives to improve productivity, and employees' receiving timely and constructive feedback from their managers.

### 4. Key Requirements for the Successful Implementation of the EPDMS

A typical performance management system process in the public service consists of five phases, namely performance planning, ongoing feedback, employee input, performance evaluation and performance review (Pulakos, 2009:4). However, Gruman and Saks (2011:127-128) propose a new model that begins with the performance agreement after which engagement facilitation, performance and engagement appraisal, feedback, employee engagement and improved performance occur.

Gruman and Saks's (2011) model is corroborated by Mokoele et al. (2018:109) who claim that a performance management system should include the following aspects of the performance cycle: A policy framework, Performance planning and agreement, Performance monitoring, Review and control, Performance appraisal and moderating, and the Management of the outcome of appraisals. The requirement for the successful implementation of the EPMDS in the public sector is the inclusion of strategic planning as the foundation of the performance agreement to enable a department to assign specific performance objectives and targets to its employees and give adequate training and sufficient information to enable them to fully participate in the departments processes (DPSA, 2007).

#### **4.1 Strategic Planning**

According to Nel et al. (2011:407), an effective organisation plans its work in advance, including the way in which it manages the performance of its employees. In this sense, planning means the setting of performance expectations for groups and individuals. Therefore, planning is the first step towards the effective management of staff performance. Dessler (2011:329) concurs by stating that the starting point of the performance management process is the setting of a clear direction through sharing the organisation's higher-level goals such as its vision, mission and strategies. Werner et al. (2011) agree that individual goals and measures are derived from the strategy of the organisation, such that the strategic objectives of the organisation are cascaded down through the different departments to the supervisors and then onto their subordinates. Dessler (2011) and Werner et al. (2011) contend that employee performance plans should be flexible so that they can be adjusted to align with changing programme objectives and work requirements, and when used effectively, these plans can become beneficial working documents that are discussed often, and not merely paperwork that is filed in a drawer and only seen during appraisal time. According to Mawila (2013:21), strategic planning is the most important phase in which supervisors and their subordinates are involved, as it is a joint participative process which sets organisational goals and specific goals for individual employees. Costello (1994:3) adds that an effective performance management system should serve as the cornerstone and driving force behind all organisational decisions, work efforts and resource allocations.

#### **4.2 Performance Agreement**

The performance agreement is the foundation of performance management at an individual level. Consequently, public servants at all levels of employment must enter into and sign performance agreements at the beginning of each financial year, for them to be assigned with specific performance objectives and targets. The individual performance agreement format applies to all levels in the department, and its contents must reflect the department's strategic and annual operational plan, its component business plan and the employee's job description, role and actual activities and responsibilities (DPSA, 2007:11). Within the South African public sector, five items that must be included in a performance agreement are:

- Employee data such as their Pearsal number, job title, level, job description with an emphasis on the main objectives, job purpose, key result areas, and generic assessment factors.
- A workplan containing the key result areas, outputs, activities and resource requirements.
- A personal development plan that assists in identifying the developmental areas and needs of an employee, and methods being used to improve these.

If an employee changes jobs during the performance cycle, but remains at the same level, a new performance agreement must be entered into for the new role, and the performance assessment should take both periods into consideration. Only supervisors on level 9 or higher are authorised to enter into a performance agreement with another employee on behalf of the department. The performance agreement, especially the workplan, should be re-negotiated if the employee has not been in the job role for three months or more for any reason, i.e., maternity, ill health, study leave, secondment, or travel, unless this absence was built into the original performance agreement. Performance agreements without completed and attached workplans should be regarded as invalid and of little use in the performance management process (DPSA, 2007:11). The Public Service Co-ordinating Bargaining Council Resolutions Resolution No 13 Of 1998 (South Africa, 1998), prescribes several items that must be included in a performance agreement for SMS members, these are key duties and

responsibilities; output targets for the performance agreement period; dates for performance review; dispute resolution mechanisms; the date on which salary increments will come into effect; and mechanisms for the management/awarding of salary increases. The objective of a timeous submission of performance agreements is to ensure that heads of departments clarify performance expectations and development needs for the year ahead early on in the financial year (South Africa, 1998).

### 4.3 Performance Monitoring, Review, and Assessment

According to Ammons (2007), effective organisations monitor assignments and projects continually. Monitoring means consistently measuring performance and providing ongoing feedback to employees on their progress. Therefore, monitoring provides the opportunity for supervisors to check on how well employees are meeting predetermined standards in order for them to make the necessary adjustments in a timely manner. Performance at the individual level must be continuously monitored to enable the identification of performance barriers, and to address development and improvement needs as they arise. Additionally, monitoring performance:

- Assists supervisors in determining progress and/or identifying obstacles in achieving objectives and targets.
- Enables supervisors and jobholders to deal with performance related problems.
- Allows supervisors to identify and provide the support needed.
- Supports the modification of objectives and targets.
- Ensures continuous learning and development (DPSA, 2007:15).

Performance review meetings are equally integral to the monitoring process. These review meetings must take place as often as is practical or required by the performance management framework. In addition, the reviews are necessary to motivate and reveal to employees, areas that need improvement, and if required they allow for the modification of the performance agreement. The supervisor should

use all opportunities to discuss the employee's performance, including component meetings, report backs, and informal discussions. Supervisors are required to monitor the employee's performance on a continuous basis and give feedback on their performance at least four times a year. If the employee's performance is satisfactory, feedback is given orally and if it is unsatisfactory it is given in writing (DPSA, 2007:16). Saravanja (2011:1) asserts that the absence of appropriate mechanisms to ensure the objectivity of performance assessment ratings and judgments through the reduction of favouritism and bias is also a contributing factor to the failure of the EPMDS.

In cases where subordinates under-perform, Erasmus, Swanepoel, Schenk, Van der Westhuizen and Wessels (2005:35) emphasise that supervisors should first take corrective measures before discharging them due to incompetence. Such corrective measures include training or re-training, counselling, coaching, setting clear work performance standards, the provision of enabling working facilities, and the design of a personal development plan. Sheridan (2007:110) claims that the causes of poor performance vary from institution to institution, and that poor performance has a negative effect on an institution.

## 5. Methodology

The questionnaire used in this study consists of both closed and open-ended questions. Each section of the questionnaire has its own strengths and weaknesses. Whilst Seliger and Shohamy (1989), cited in Zohrabi (2013:254) are of the opinion that closed ended questionnaires are more efficient because of their ease of analysis, Kumar (2005:132) states that with close ended questions, all possible answers are set out and participants tick the category that best describes their answer. In terms of population of the study, it encompasses all employees in the Chief Directorate: Provincial and Local Liaison at the Government Communications and Information System (GCIS). The GCIS is a government department mandated to deliver effective strategic government communication. Employees from levels 2 to 14 who were familiar with the implementation of the EPMDS were purposefully selected as follows:

- Levels 13-14 = (11) are the SMS responsible for planning and formulating strategies.



- Levels 9-12 = (63) are middle management who assist in planning and formulating strategies, and also implement the planned programmes and projects.
- Levels 6-8 = (28) are operational and junior management employees who implement the programmes and projects.
- Levels 2-5 = (8) are clerical support staff to the Chief Directorate.
- How often do you receive the performance bonus?
- Are bonuses awarded fairly?
- What are the challenges that you experience during EPMDS agreements and performance reviews?

A total number of 110 online questionnaires were sent to respondents. In total, 51 participants completed the questionnaires, of which two were no longer in the chosen sampling category. The responses of these two participants were not included in the analysis. Therefore, the views represented are of the 49 remaining participants. Quantitative data is processed through the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, which enables the presentation of findings in a numerical manner through figures and tables, the central task during qualitative data analysis is to identify common themes in peoples' descriptions of their experiences.

## 6. Presentation and the Analysis of Empirical Results

In this study, the questions sought to unpack the knowledge and experience that participant had with the EPMDS by engaging them with the following questions:

- Have you ever heard about EPMDS?
- What is your view on EPMDS?
- Do you think EPMDS motivates employees?
- How often do you sign an Employee Performance Agreement?
- How often does assessment take place?
- Do you think EPMDS is fair?
- Do you think your supervisor understand EPMDS and its implementation?
- Do you receive any feedback from your supervisor about your performance?

As far as the biographical profile of participants is concerned, 39% were male and 61% female. In terms of the age range of the participants, 35% were aged between 18-35 years, 47% were aged between 36-50 years, and 18% were aged 51 and above. When profiling their qualifications, 6% had a high school qualification, 29% had completed an undergraduate qualification, and 65% were postgraduate degree or diploma holders. The occupation level of the participants showed that 12% were senior managers, 63% were middle managers, 20% were in lower management and 4% were clerical support staff. In terms of experience, 61% had 10 or more years of experience, 27% had 6-9 years of experience, 6% had 3-5 years of experience, 4% had 1-2 years of experience and 2% had less than one year of experience. To keep the level of employment of the participants confidential, the following pseudonyms for the various employment categories are used as identifiers:

- Level 13-14 = RS4.
- Level 9-12 = RS3.
- Level 6-8 = RS2.
- Level 2-5 = RS1.

### 6.1 Participant Knowledge and Supervisor Understanding of the EPMDS

The South African government introduced the EPMDS as an instrument to manage the performance of public servants to improve the quality of public service delivery. The questions, "*Have you ever heard about EPMDS*" and "*What is your view on EPMDS*" were used to determine participants' understanding of the system. Since 2016, it has been mandatory for all government departments at provincial and national spheres levels to have an effective and efficient PMDS for managing the performance of their employees.

Figure 1 shows participants views on their knowledge of the EPMDS. It can be concluded that the performance management system is embedded within the South African public service culture. Almost all of the participants (98%) are aware of the EPMDS and only 2% have not heard about it. Participants' understanding of the EPMDS and its implementation are linked to knowledge of the system. This is reflected in Figure 2.

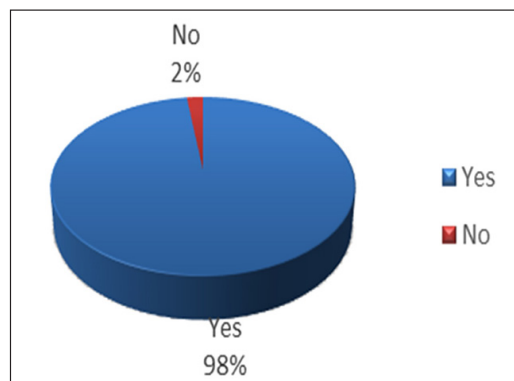
Twenty-seven percent (27%) of participants believe that supervisors understand the EPMDS and its implementation, while 6% believe that their supervisors do not, 12% have neutral views and the majority

of participants (55%) did not comment. A similar study conducted in the Limpopo Province revealed that supervisors expressed frustrations during the signing of performance contracts and performance reviews. Most of the participants (52.1%) were able to implement the EPMDS, 36.8% had average ability and only 11.5% lacked the ability to implement their EPMDS (Mashego & Skaal, 2016:2).

### 6.2 Participants Motivational Levels on the EPMDS

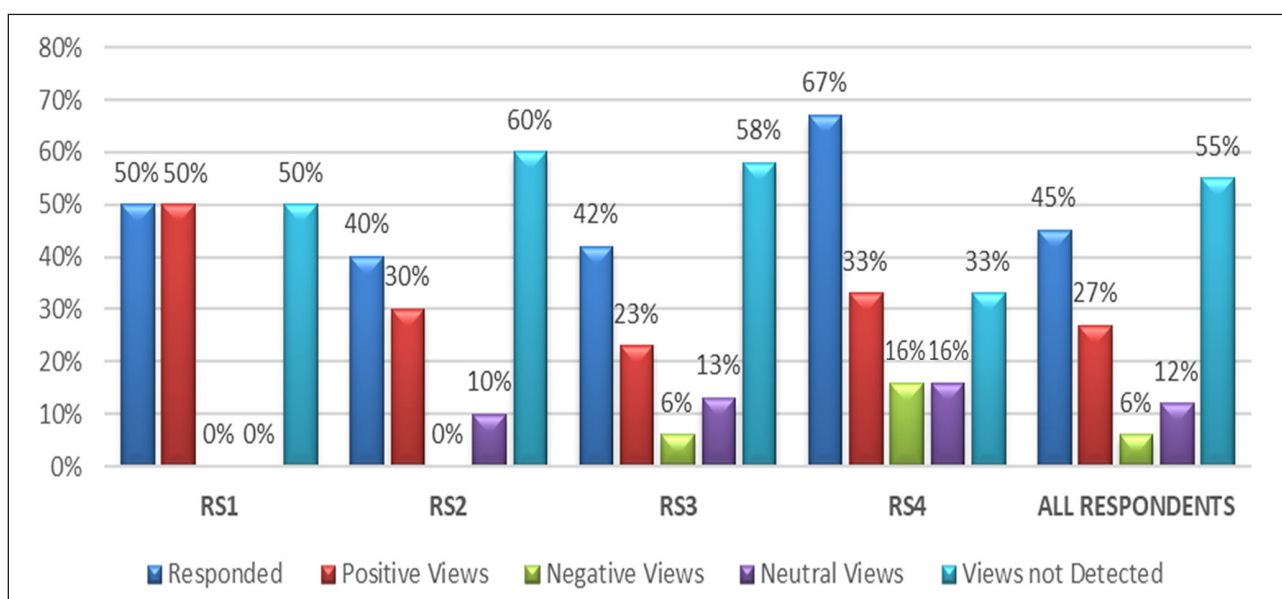
The question, "Do you think EPMDS motivates employees?" aimed to establish the motivational levels of

**Figure 1: Participant Responses on Whether They Have Heard About EPMDS**



Source: Authors

**Figure 2: Participant Responses on Whether Supervisors Understand the EPMDS and Its Implementation**



Source: Authors

the EPMDS. Figure 3 below gives an indication of participant responses.

Figure 3 shows that of all the participants who responded to the question, 35% are motivated by the EPMDS and 2% are not motivated. Half (50%) of participants in the RS1 category responded to this question and answered that they are motivated by the EPMDS. No participant responded negatively to this question and there were no neutral views. For the RS2 category, 20% of participants responded that they are motivated by the EPMDS, and 32% of the participants from RS3 responded with the same. A significant percentage from the RS4 category (67%) feel motivated by the EPMDS. Answers from the open-ended questions yielded the following qualitative findings:

*RS3 "It creates a competitive atmosphere amongst employees and jealousy to those who do not get performance bonuses, it creates the 'us' and 'them' situation. It can [work], provided it is used optimally."*

*RS4 "It motivates employees as it creates healthy competition if implemented correctly, also if there is a rewards system attached to it."*

Employee motivation is regarded as one of various factors that influence employee performance.

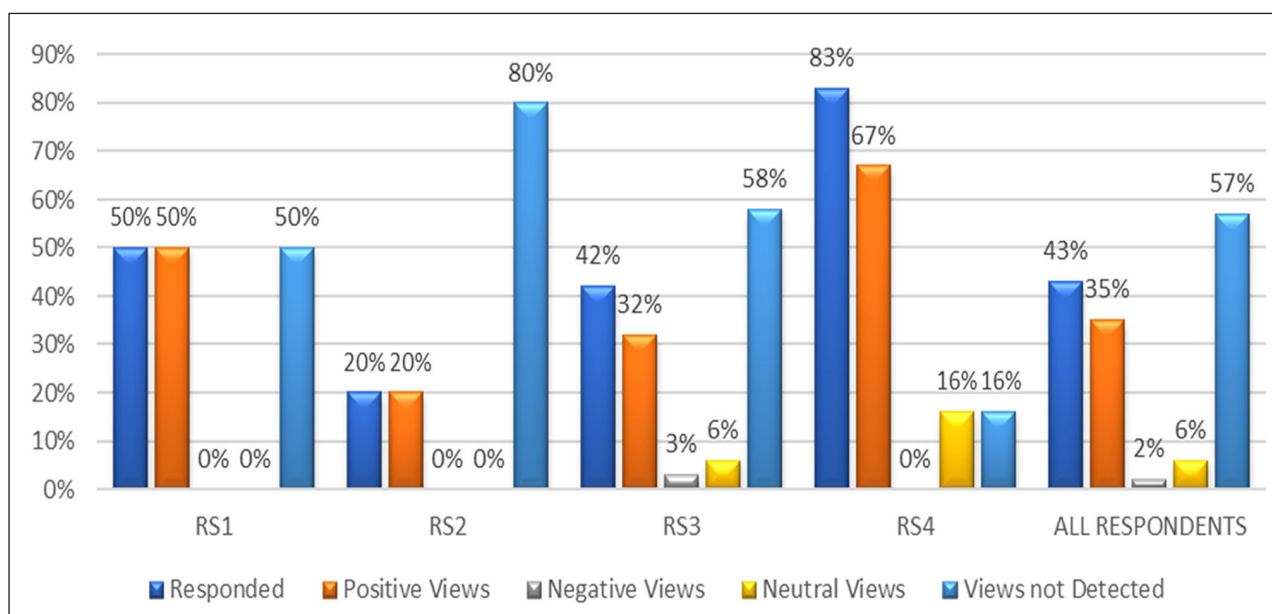
Werner et al. (2011) note that many supervisors are of the view that if their subordinates were motivated, they would have been committed and would not be facing numerous workplace challenges on a daily basis. In other words, to improve performance, staff must be committed and motivated to do their work. However, employee performance does not only rely on how well they are committed and motivated, multiple other factors come into play.

### 6.3 The Submission and Assessment of Employee Performance Agreements

Performance agreements are an integral part of the annual planning process, therefore public servants at all levels of employment must enter into and sign performance agreements at the beginning of each financial year, or three months after their appointment date. Figure 4 on the next page attempts to discover this practice at the GCIS.

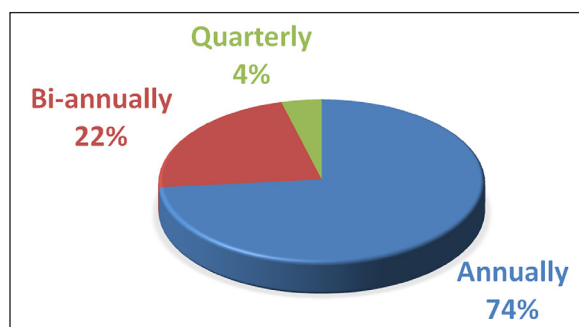
Figure 4 shows that 74% of participants sign their performance agreements annually, 22% bi-annually and 4% quarterly. The variation in signing intervals is not clear from the data, it could be that some employees joined the department in the middle of the financial year, or that some were unable to differentiate between the signing of a performance agreement and performance assessment which are also signed.

**Figure 3: Responses of Participants on Whether EPMDS Motivates Employees**



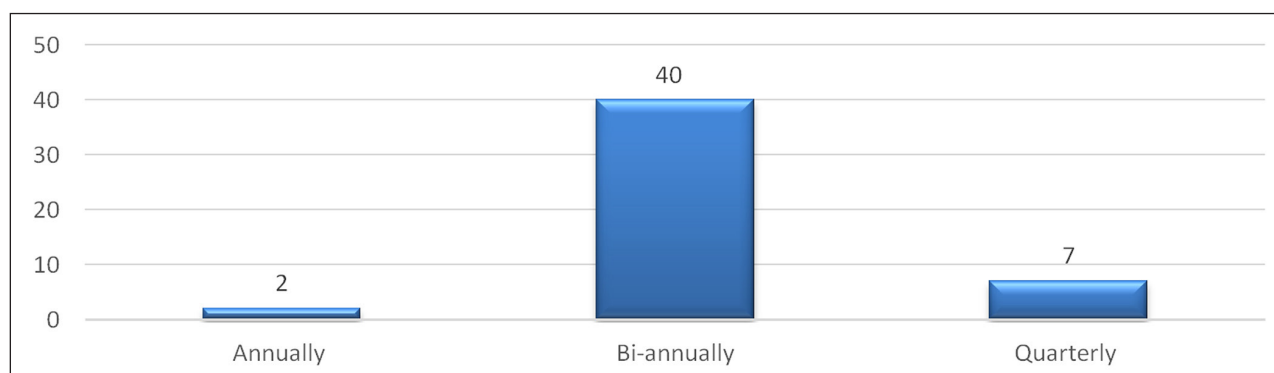
Source: Authors

**Figure 4: Responses of Participants on How Often They Sign an Employee Performance Agreement**



Source: Authors

**Figure 5: Participant Responses on How Often Assessments Take Place**



Source: Authors

Figure 5 shows that a significant number of participants are assessed bi-annually, and 4% are assessed annually. Individual performance assessment is a normal process which is conducted quarterly or bi-annually depending on the need of the organisation. Performance assessment or review meetings are an integral part of the monitoring process. They are a necessary means of monitoring employees to reveal to the employee areas that need improvement, and if required are used to modify the performance agreement. The supervisor should use all opportunities to discuss the employee's performance, including component meetings, report backs, and informal discussions (DPSA, 2007:16). Assessments are standardised across all national and provincial governments to ensure the early detection of poor performance and to take remedial action where necessary. A monitoring and evaluation committee also plays a huge role in employee monitoring, by providing recommendations and resolving all complaints before the final evaluation process takes place. Doing this ensures

that all matters arising from quarterly assessments are identified and resolved before the final assessment takes place (Makamu, 2016:277).

#### 6.4 Fairness of the EPMDS on Employees

Openness, fairness and objectivity form an integral part of the performance management system. Fairness means that employees should be given a copy of the written assessment, and the opportunity to comment on it. In addition, employees have the right to appeal against an assessment that they believe to be unfair (Makamu, 2016:30). Mashego and Skaal (2016:2) are of the opinion that the EPMDS is designed to allow for continuous assessment, the timeous identification of performance gaps, and the institution of corrective measures. Practically, the EPMDS assessment meeting is a one-on-one discussion between a supervisor and the employee. The outcomes of the half-yearly feedback session and the end of year assessment should be signed by both parties. The September review is the mid-term



review report for the April to September period. At all levels, the periodic reviews must include a discussion on the employee's development plan requirements. The final assessment and discussion must take place at the end of the performance cycle which coincides with the end of the financial year (DPSA, 2007:17).

Figure 6 reveals that 30 participants feel that the EPMDS system is fair, 8 participants feel that it is not fair, 7 participants feel that it is not always fair and 4 participants did not state their views. Answers from the open-ended questions yielded the following qualitative findings:

*RS3 "EPMDS is fair, however [the] supervisor and assessment committees implement it unfairly. A case in point, you will do the assessment with your supervisor and agree on the scoring and motivation for that, only for the committee to overrule those scorings."*

*RS3 "I do think it is fair. I think it differs on the set targets and the criteria used to determine who qualifies."*

*RS3 "EPMDS is not a fair and transparent process. Some supervisors allocate scores without being objective. Issues of friendship with subordinates and favouritisms [with] underperforming employees. All supervisors allocating more scores to [the] employee just to avoid the critics that the section is not performing."*

*RS3 "The system does not really deal with performance issues, it is just for compliance."*

*RS3 "It is a fair way of evaluating one's performance. It assists to identify areas of improvement and skilling/re-skilling an employee. It makes it fair and easy for an employee to be remunerated*

*for extraordinary performance, if it's implemented fairly."*

*RS2 "It's a good management tool if implemented in accordance to its guidelines and it is a good tool to measure performance if it is done right."*

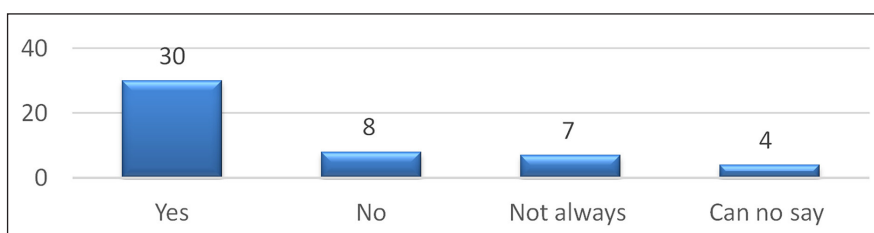
### 6.5 Challenges Experienced During EPMDS Agreements and Reviews

Although the EPMDS is believed to be an appropriate instrument to evaluate employee performance, major challenges exist. This study emanates from the challenges and failures in the implementation of the EPMDS in the South African public service mainly because of the non-existence of accountability measures, the poor management of performance by supervisors, and the use of a set of measurable performance standards that are not accurate. As a result, participants were asked questions on challenges that they experienced during the EPMDS agreements and reviews.

Of those who replied to this question, 6% indicated that they experienced no challenges during the EPMDS agreement and review process, 69% indicated that they have, and 24% did not give an answer. For RS1 participants, half of them did not experience any challenges, there was a significant percentage (70%) of RS2 participants who had challenges. However, the views of other participants in this group could not be captured. The majority (80%) of RS3 participants appeared to have challenges. At RS4 which is the highest level of employment category, 83% responded that they have experienced challenges with the EPMDS. See Figure 7 on the next page.

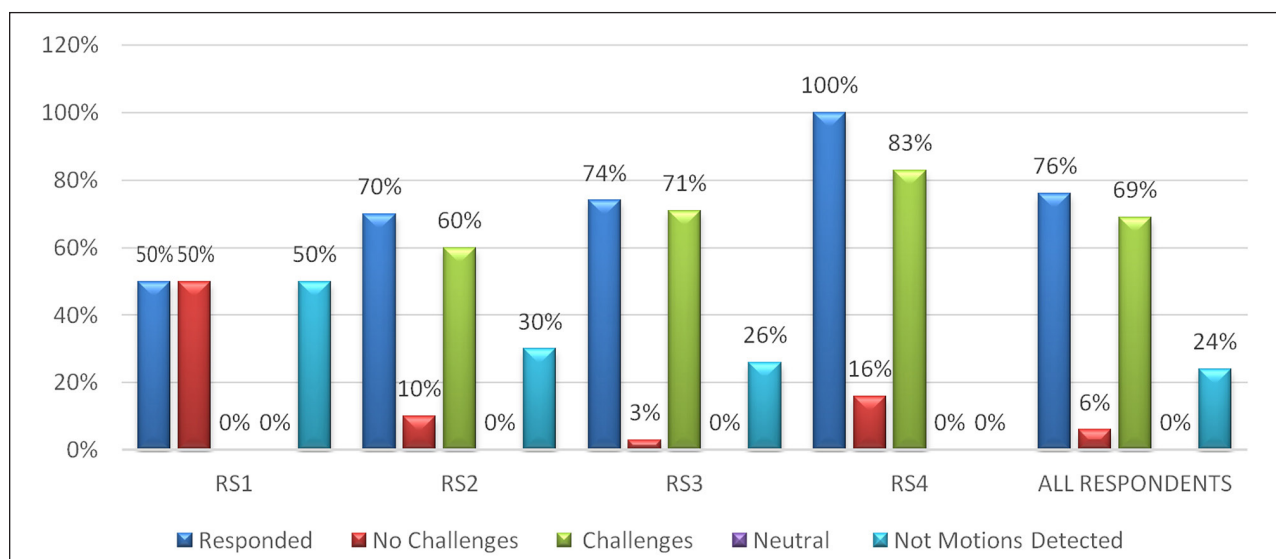
Answers from the open-ended questions show that there are numerous challenges experienced during the signing of EPMDS agreements and EPMDS performance assessments:

**Figure 6: Responses of Participants on Whether They Think EPMDS is Fair**



Source: Authors

**Figure 7: Responses of Participants on Challenges They Experience During EPMDS Agreements and Reviews**



Source: Authors

RS4 "There is only limited time to address issues related to skills development since EPMDS is given priority twice a year. Regular assessment or provision of skills development could assist in improving EPMDS.

RS4 "There are Managers who have used EPMDS unfairly towards their subordinates which creates tension and unhappiness."

RS3 "Even when you have identified areas of challenge within your work, you do not attend the recommended or suggested training."

RS3 "Yes there are, if employees are no longer going to get performance reward[s], they [are] then not going to perform beyond what is expected of them since there is nothing that motivate them."

RS3 "...it should not be only when there is under-performance that the supervisor intervenes [by] doing the performance development plans and evaluations thereof, [they should be done] regularly to enhance employee performance."

RS3 "Currently the EPMDS is not functional in our institution and we are left in the dark and morale of performance is very low."

RS3 "The EPMDS is a good system although it is applied differently by departments and supervisors. EPMDS should be about performance standards..."

RS2 "The motivation process and evidence as well with the supervisor ability to convince the panel on scoring so that bonus can be awarded."

RS2 "Most managers, they score the employees according to personal interest."

RS1 "Sometimes being unable to capture the performance agreement in the system when the system is giving an error code."

In summary, the majority of participants believe that there are challenges in the implementation of the EPMDS at the GCIS. Lemaio (2015) concurs by echoing that the implementation failure of performance management systems is attributed to the fact that it is viewed as a forced bureaucratic chore which has very little to do with real work. The system is viewed as being authoritative, and is used with the intention of exposing inadequacies, faults and poor performance. Due to the fact that performance reviews are confrontational in nature, managers are often hesitant to engage with employees during these sessions.

## 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

Performance management is viewed as a purposeful, continuous process aimed at managing and developing employee behaviour for the achievement of the organisation's strategic goals. The focus of this study is on the EPMDS for employees below

SMS at the GCIS. The aim of the EPMDS is to enhance the performance of public servants and the effectiveness of the public service to improve the quality of public service delivery. Through the administration of an online questionnaire, the results showed that the EPMDS is an integral part of the public service's annual planning process. However, the system is not fair or transparent, and supervisors require more training. The EPMDS is implemented differently across the various public sector departments, thus it is open to manipulation. Participants suggested that new employees should be trained so that they understand what the system aims to achieve. The system should allow for changes on the agreements to cater for unforeseen circumstances. A call for an appointment of an independent party to assess employees when disagreements arise was emphasised the participants.

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# Situating the Role of Lifelong Learning in the Digital Era: The Botswana Context

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**Abstract:** Like the revolutions that preceded it, the Fourth Industrial Revolution has the potential to improve the quality of life for many people in the world as technology facilitates efficient delivery of services. At the same time, the revolution could cause greater inequalities particularly in its potential to disrupt labor markets as automation substitutes for labor across sectors of the economy. The likely displacement of low and medium skilled workers implies that the benefits accruing from digitalization will be savored alongside some risks hence the need to prepare organizations to transform and adapt in order to survive the storm. While African countries are already witnessing the innovations, it is true that they have traditionally been disadvantaged and so risk falling further behind if they fail to adequately prepare themselves for the innovations. One way to get Africa ready to benefit from the advent of new technologies would be to prepare current and future public sector workers for the new technologies. This could be done by re-orienting education systems and workplaces by growing and expanding the lifelong learning sub-sector that would be at the center of reskilling the current workforce through work-based learning. This review paper seeks to situate the role of lifelong learning in the digital era for Botswana and Africa in general. The paper concludes that Botswana and African countries generally must demonstrate the prominent role of lifelong learning in a technologically driven world by ensuring that the lifelong learning sub-sector is adequately structured and operationalized with a well-defined policy framework so that it offers the skills that would enable Africans to take advantage of available global opportunities.

**Keywords:** Digitalization, Fourth Industrial Revolution, Technologies, Lifelong learning

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## 1. Introduction

The World Economic Forum has declared that the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) is changing the world because new technologies are impacting all disciplines; economies and industries. Schwab (2019) posits that the 4IR is more than technological advancement mainly because it has the potential to bring about changes that can bring about shifts in knowledge. The Fourth Industrial Revolution which is building on the Third Industrial Revolution is characterised by a fusion of technologies that are blurring the lines between the physical, digital and biological spheres (Xing, Marwala & Marwala, 2018). These fusions are largely the result of scientific and technological advances in various fields which are fundamentally altering the way people live, work and relate to one another (WEF, 2017; Xing & Marwala, 2017).

The 4IR promises to usher in a future that is expected to be fluid and uncertain as a result of these disruptive technologies. Whereas these technologies threaten traditional operations comprising

among others agriculture, environmental protection, defense and intelligence, public safety and public transportation (Xing *et al.*, 2018), there is nevertheless a sense of urgency for countries to adopt the technologies in order to pursue the agenda for sustainable development through the provision of services that aim at improving the quality of life for all citizens (Ally & Work, 2019). African countries have already embraced some of these technologies and innovations to address a variety of developmental challenges. With these innovations rapidly becoming part of private and public sector operations, it is crucial that governments and their people are adequately informed about the likely benefits and potential risks of these technologies.

Grounded on the traditional/historical impact of technological transformation on workers, especially the fear of losing one's job, this paper argues for a prominent role of Lifelong Learning (LLL) in preparing current and future workers for the new technologies. It is in recognition that governments cannot ignore these technologies nor can they just let their citizens lose jobs that the need to fuse

technological development and human resource development become imperative. Thompson and Mayhom (2012) warned that massive changes in technology can eliminate 'techno-stress'. Yet it has been argued that workers are often generally willing to learn and use new technologies (Thompson & Mayhom, 2012) so that they are adequately prepared for a mixed reality future (Grodotzki *et al.*, 2018). Lifelong learning supported by effective LLL systems thus becomes a universal tool to prepare and/or re-orient workers by imparting skills needed for the new tasks.

## 2. The Fourth Industrial Revolution and the Digitization of the Workplace

Like other industrial revolutions before it, the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) is underpinned by exponential changes in technology. Though the Fourth Industrial Revolution is seen as a continuum of first three industrial revolutions, a key distinguishing feature of the 4IR is that it blurs the physical idea of industry which has been conceptualized as a big factory and large number of employees (Yang, 2019). WEF (2017:3) and Xing & Marwala (2017:11) define the Fourth Industrial Revolution as 'a fusion of disruptive technologies that are blurring the lines between the physical, digital and biological spheres'.

It is distinguished by the speed of breakthrough that makes it evolve at an exponential pace. It combines invisible digital technologies such as computer storage power or cloud service with the other technologies resulting in multiple exponential technologies (Penprase, 2018). The fusion of technologies such as robotics, Artificial Intelligence, additive manufacturing, the internet of things and the inherent rapid changes the world is undergoing, fundamentally impact and/or disrupt every industry in every country (Xie *et al.*, 2018). The breakthroughs are particularly singled out for changing traditional processes. In particular, they are noted for transforming production processes and business models across different industries. The technological advances underlying the 4IR present both opportunities and threats. In terms of opportunities, these technologies have the potential to increase efficiency in service provision while also ensuring reduced costs. For instance, Rwanda launched an initiative to use drones to deliver blood for blood transfusions which is intended to improve turnaround time for delivery of life saving blood to

patients in the rural areas (Ackerman & Koziol, 2019). In Nigeria Hello Tractors use the Global Positioning System (GPS) to link farmers with tractor service providers in their locality and the results of this initiative have been timely planting and harvesting leading to improved agricultural production (Hello Tractor.com, 2019). In Botswana, at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, the Botswana Defence Force in collaboration with Botswana University of Science and Technology (BUIST) used drone sprayers to disinfect the air in open public spaces with a view to target airborne coronavirus and thereby limit airborne pathogens.

These innovations have and continue to re-shape and revolutionize work in lasting ways and to unprecedented degree. A cardinal feature of the 4IR is that it calls for integration and collaboration on long term technology and capacity development and is globally focused (Davis, 2016). In a way, these technologies cannot be ignored yet they have the potential to disrupt almost every industry in all countries. Xu *et al.* (2018) state that each subsequent revolution destroys many of the jobs of the preceding revolution. Emanating from this universal truth and as was the case with other industrial revolutions, is that the 4IR is destined to destroy many jobs and render many workers redundant or irrelevant. Given the radical changes the world is experiencing as well that the innovations are continuous and rapidly changing, it means the depth of these changes are likely to be on an unprecedented scale.

While the 4IR offers irreversible opportunities particularly in respect of timely and less costly services, it also presents pervasive challenges to existing skills set and literacies in many developing countries. For developing communities to prepare themselves for the benefits from and to cope with these technologies, it is important to develop literacies that people need for present times. The 4IR is essentially replacing the jobs created by the Third Industrial Revolution in ways that render the skills and literacies that have enabled workers to operate adequately in the past age.

The direct impact of this upheaval would be loss of jobs and this could be avoided by re-orienting the existing workforce through provision of skills and literacies required for new work tasks, hence the quest for lifelong learning that straddles formal, non-formal and informal learning.

### 3. Situating the Role of Lifelong Learning

The WEF reported in 2016 that *'by one popular estimate, 65% of children entering primary school today will ultimately end up working in completely new job types that do not yet exist'*. The reality is that current job types are becoming obsolete and will be replaced by new job types that require completely new skills set and literacies. There is therefore a need to bridge this gap so that learners are given skills appropriate and relevant to the new jobs. It is gratifying that the United Nations Sustainable Development 2030 Agenda contains Goal 4 which seeks to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and provide lifelong learning opportunities for all. In effect, the agenda for the promotion of lifelong learning is a global goal that offers UN member states a springboard from where to launch the lifelong learning subsector. The goal obliges states to reshape their education system so that the systems are designed to provide learning or education opportunities for all (Doucet & Evers, 2018). It is within this context that the Government of Botswana took a deliberate decision to develop a strategy for lifelong learning in an endeavour to respond to the challenges posed by 4IR.

The Botswana's Education and Training Sector Strategic Plan (ETSSP, 2015-2020) identifies lifelong learning as a critical component in efforts to improve education, training and employment pathways (ETSSP, 2015). A major focus area is the need to broaden lifelong learning opportunities and enhance the quality of education at all levels. The idea of lifelong learning is founded on the conception of education that is flexible, diverse and available at different times for all age groups and pursued throughout life. Though there is no universally accepted definition of lifelong learning, the concept recognizes that learning has a "wider contribution" (DFEE, 1998) philosophical perspective-P4) and that it helps make a civilized society while also promoting active citizenship. Aspin (2007) makes the point that lifelong learning has a traditional *'cradle is grave'* connotation and that it tends to highlight post-school and alternative forms of learning. The lifelong learning paradigm evolved from a claim that education is a continuous process that straddles the spectrum of the entire life of human being. This evolution is, in part, driven by the realities of the "knowledge society where it is necessary to strengthen competences..." (Persico,

2014:29). From here on, lifelong learning was used as a guiding principle for the development of education policies which are focused on creating the most competitive knowledge-based economy (Persico, 2014:30).

From this perspective, lifelong learning has come to be defined as all learning activity that takes place throughout one's life and is aimed at improving knowledge, skills and competencies from a civic, social, professional and personal perspective (European Commission, 2001). Jarvis (2010) defines it as the combination of processes throughout the life of the person as a whole perceived in a social situation. Garrido and Ejido (2006) define lifelong learning as an on-going process throughout one's life that provides and articulates formal, non-formal and informal learning experiences.

A major theme in all these definitions is the person as a continually changing being who need to acquire competences ranging from knowledge, practical skills and positive attitudes necessary for people to actively participate and be part of the knowledge society. Drawing from these definitions, it can be inferred that lifelong learning aims at improving the quality of life of those people through the provision of equal access to quality learning opportunity, whether formal, non-formal or informal.

Whereas definitions are crucial in providing comprehensive operational parameters for specific contexts, they also have the potential to limit scope and depth of concepts. Thus the preceding definition of LLL should be understood as an attempt to provide focus rather than ring fence or construct the meaning of lifelong learning in varying contexts. Accordingly, the concept of LLL would better be understood in terms of its emphasis on the importance of equal opportunities for learning; the learner as the focal point of learning activities and the quality and relevance of learning opportunities (European Commission, 2001).

### 4. Lifelong Learning in Botswana

As has already been pointed out, Botswana's Education and Training Sector Strategies Plan (ETSSP) has identified lifelong learning as a crucial intervention for improving the quality of learning at all levels. The need to broaden lifelong learning opportunities is accentuated by an appreciation that *"in a competitive knowledge-based society and*

economy, there is an ever intensifying demand for institutional systems, which assist learning and the dissemination of knowledge to be adjusted to individual and community expectations" (ETSSP, 2015:107). In this respect, lifelong learning will be a critical tool for equipping present and future generation to function efficiently in the new society while at the same time being able to meet societal challenges arising from the new technologies. In a way, the concept of lifelong learning goes beyond the need for people to learn beyond their formal schooling by emphasizing the ideal of providing opportunities for continuous development for all with a view to the dynamic development of competences relevant to the contemporary world and changing job tasks.

ETSSP (2015:107) states that the lifelong learning subsector focuses on strengthening opportunities for equal access to the institutions of public education as well as on providing a second chance for individuals. The lifelong learning subsector also seeks to encourage work-based learning to enable employees to upgrade the skills and remain relevant in the techno-driven world. The Botswana lifelong learning subsector further seeks to offer easy transition from school to adult life by combining education and employment and thus bring flexibility to pathways and choices (ETSSP, 2015).

Whereas there is little doubt that most countries (including Botswana) have come to appreciate the value of lifelong learning in coping with the disruption presented by the 4IR, responses at the institutional levels in the form of formulating a lifelong learning sub-sector that is well-structured and governed through a coherent-policy, regulatory and coordinating frameworks has lagged behind (Jaldemark, 2021). This calls for targeted intervention so as to institutionalize the status of lifelong learning in Botswana mainly by developing a comprehensive lifelong learning policy that will spell out responsibilities of key institutions. Within this context, Botswana's lifelong learning subsector should be context specific with an emphasis on partnerships in order to make use of all available resources and capacities.

According to ETSSP (2015), the strategic priorities for the lifelong learning sub-sector shall comprise:

- Establishing a culture to promote continuous learning and improve access and equality to quality education.

- Strengthening the governance and coordination of the lifelong learning sector to develop image of the subsector.
- Strengthening career guidance and counselling of lifelong learning
- Strengthening lifelong learning at basic skills and key competency levels to provide adequate foundations and a strong base for continuous development amongst all individuals.
- Developing a robust recognition of prior learning system to recognise non-formal and informal learning.
- Supporting disadvantaged groups at risk of exclusion from the labour market.

By appreciating the basic reality that change is taking place and that technology is integral to this change, Botswana has been able to anticipate changes in the nature of work or new job tasks that have the potential to disrupt the labour market mainly by rendering many workers redundant. Whereas it is impossible to make precise predictions in form of imagining the exact skills that would be needed, such rough estimates helped the government to put in place intervention measures albeit belatedly, to transform the education system in order to incorporate the lifelong learning subsector as a vital cog in the transformation of society and the economy.

Like elsewhere, lifelong, inclusive and equitable quality education; formal and informal, physical and digital, will be vital in preparing Botswana's society to thrive in this uncertain future (Brown-Martin, 2017).

Biao (2022:172) notes that there is a need for people to continually learn to be by accessing all learning opportunities aimed at helping the to acquire relevant knowledge and skills for the purpose of solving most challenges that may come their way.

Thus, it is safe to state that Botswana has taken a plausible decision to infuse lifelong learning ideals within its systems in order to meet the challenges ahead. The need to equip its people with skills and knowledge to reimagine society to meet challenges presented by the 4IR remains the driving force to revolutionize the education sector particularly by situating the critical role of lifelong learning. This is in no doubt in vogue but pitfalls lay ahead.



## 5. Lifelong Learning for the Digital Era in the Botswana Context

It has been noted that the urgency to use 4IR technologies is driven by a desire to improve the quality of life of people by providing quality and timely services. As a developing country that aspires to transform from middle income to a high income state, Botswana has set sight on innovative ways of driving the transformation strategy. In this respect, Botswana seeks to achieve among others, a vibrant economy that is integrated into the global economy; an economy that is innovative and creative (Maruatona, 2012) with a self-reliant entrepreneurial spirit. These aspirations invariably demand improvement in the quality of education, so that it truly plays a catalytic role in positioning workers for the tasks ahead. In this pursuit, Botswana acknowledges the key role that the 4IR technologies would play in the nation's transformation agenda. In the same breadth, Botswana acknowledges that access to quality education is critical in utilizing these unavoidable technologies but that remains a daunting challenge. While technological progress benefits humanity (Brown-Martin, 2017), the challenge, especially for developing countries, is often in terms of implementing these technologies for the benefit of their people. The challenge then is to address the gaps between the potential benefits of the 4IR technologies and the preparedness/readiness of developing countries to absorb and mitigate the disruptive innovations. Thus, there is a need to adopt strategies that align with technological developments (Janssen, Weerakkody, Ismagilov, Sivarajah & Irani, 2020) and this could include the provision of opportunities for workplace learning. Ashok, Al Badi Al Bhahari, Madan & Dzandi (2021) highlight the need for public sector organisations to embrace new technologies and innovations which lead to improved governance and for employees to be familiar with such technology, the need for lifelong learning becomes apparent. It is generally acknowledged that these innovations are set to replace many of the tasks previously performed by humans. To keep up government and businesses will need to provide constant quality training.

Gladstone (2016) states that "in an age when upheaval and reinvention are accepted givens of everyday business, companies and individuals are recognizing the need for lifelong learning". Gladstone (2016) identifies three current trends that

require employees to focus more on self-education and training and these are the following:

- Acceleration – change is happening faster than ever people are having a hard time keeping up hence the need for continuous learning.
- Digitization – almost all companies are integrating technology in a bigger way and technology is constantly updating hence the need for continuous learning for workers to remain relevant and functional.
- Automation – machines and robots are replacing humans in many roles hence the need for lifelong learning to re-orient employees to perform new tasks.

These trends place a duty on employees to develop a culture of learning that will enable them to respond to the challenges of a rapidly changing world and thus remain relevant in their work and/or in the job market generally. One of the pillars of LLL has recently been identified as learning to change, to proactively direct or re-direct change for human well-being and development (Biao, 2022). This observation underscores that people generally and workers in particular have a duty to not only change but more importantly, to be proactive in influencing change that would benefit society.

## 6. Lifelong Learning and the Changing Nature of Public Service

As discussed earlier, the fourth Industrial Revolution is characterized by fundamental systems changes that have the potential to unsettle the worker. As is the case in most sectors, the changing nature of the public service demonstrates that change has become the operative word amid growing expectation that the new technologies will enforce practices and work ethics that respond to new ideas, demands and the way work is organized and executed in government (Janssen *et al.*, 2020). The success of the workforce in adapting to and operating in accordance with the dictates of the digital economy, may well depend on how well public sector workers are prepared for the changes that are shaping the character of public institutions (Ashok *et al.*, 2021).

This talks to the need to reposition and re-purpose public sector workers to embrace and align with the changing governmental landscape that is impacting

their work with long-term effects. This invariably demands the provision of learning opportunities to public sector workers for re-skilling and generally for new literacies (Maruatona, 2012) in order that they effectively respond to the emerging technological challenges (Asho, *et al.*, 2021). The need for public sector workers to strengthen their knowledge and skills in order that they thrive in the digital world presents a monumental challenge for the provision of lifelong learning. Beyond the provision of new knowledge and literacies for the digital workplace, lifelong learning is essential in developing a mind-set that embraces constant changes in response to changing technologies generally and the way work is organized specifically. Lifelong learning is required to provide the impetus needed to enable public sector workers to blend their own knowledge with new technological capabilities to enhance their performance on the job. There is no denying that technological innovations create new opportunities but at the same time they disrupt entrenched work practices as in changes in job tasks and behaviours. Lifelong learning will avail opportunities for public sector employees to acquire requisite digital skills and capabilities so that they operate effectively with intelligent technologies and machines. Since it is accepted that change has become the operative word as technologies evolve, public sector employees must also evolve in knowledge, skills and attitudes. Lifelong learning offers to expand employees' knowledge and skills so that they are effective in their jobs while also remaining relevant in an ever changing workplace.

## 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

Alvin Toffer, an influential American writer and futurist, is quoted as saying '*the illiterate of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn*' (<https://tonyfaulkner.wordpress.com>). When we consider the challenges presented by the 4IR, what immediately come to mind is the kind of skills and knowledge that is required to operate optimally in the new world. Such skills would ordinarily include the skills needed for the current job tasks such as creativity, innovation, critical thinking and that are related ones. The role of the formal education system cannot be down played in terms of preparing learners for the world of work. Yet, the formal education systems need to be complemented and infused with a stand of learning for all aspects of

life. Investment in human capital will be the pillar upon which success in a techno-driven world would be guaranteed. These realities envision a strand of learning that straddles the spheres of human life resulting in persons that are continually developing in competences and that strand of learning is lifelong learning.

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# An Assessment of Water Scarcity and Deficit in the Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipality in Limpopo Province

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**Abstract:** The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 requires that every individual should have access to sufficient water. Unfortunately, the residents of Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipality do not have adequate access to clean water due to water scarcity and deficit. The primary aim of this paper is to identify factors that contribute to water scarcity and deficit in the Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipality. For the purpose of this study, the economic theory of scarcity is used to understand the magnitude of challenges posed by lack of water. For this research, the qualitative methodology was used to collect data. Specifically, semi-structured interviews were undertaken to collect relevant information while purposive sampling was used to select a sample of 30 participants. Thematic data analysis process and procedures were used to analyse collected data. The findings of this study revealed that water cut off rotation system, population growth, illegal water connections, and faulty water reticulation system caused by leaking pipes and burst pipes has contributed to water scarcity and deficit. Although it appears that the municipality is putting efforts into improving maintenance and repairs of the water reticulation system, this does not seem to be adequate in addressing all the water scarcity challenges. It is recommended that the municipality should consider drilling multiple water boreholes in the area to address water shortages.

**Keywords:** Sanitation, Water, Water deficit, Water scarcity, Water supply

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## 1. Introduction

Section 27 (b) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996), states that water is a basic need that must be provided to all citizens, and that this is an obligation of government. As stated in the White Paper on Water Supply and Sanitation Policy (Republic of South Africa, 1994), the free basic water supply is defined as 25 litres per person per day. In other words, this is considered to be the minimum amount of water required for direct consumption, including the preparation of food, as well as daily personal hygiene. According to the Constitution of Republic of South Africa, 1996, water must be free from contamination or pollution, suggesting that people must have access to clean and good quality water. It is indisputable that contaminated water sources would create water deficit in which case people would have less or no access to clean and drinkable water.

Water scarcity and deficit could be attributed to several factors. For example, climate change exacerbates the water shortage while environmental degradation contributes to contamination of water resources and thus reduce the natural storage of

water. Zareian and Eslamian (2019) report that in recent years, the availability of water resources was negatively impacted by climate change which is invariably linked with droughts and water shortages. In line with this view, Wang and Yuan (2018) also state that drought with abnormally high temperatures is rapidly intensified by flash droughts which had greatly threatened crop yields and water supply and had aroused public concern about the warming climate. Another factor that is worth noting that may result in water deficit is called surface run-off. Uitto and Biswas (2000) identified the surface run off as a cause of shortage of drinkable water. This is because floods carry different objects from the ground and deposits them into drinkable water sources. The build-up of pollutants generated by organic compounds in road surfaces, leads to their presence in water runoff while the resulting sediment affects water quality in rural areas (Nekhavambe, Van Ree & Fatoki, 2014). The rivers, fountains and dams that normally provide water to households may be rendered undrinkable during heavy floods and for some days or weeks after the floods have subsided.

South Africa is categorised as a water stressed country, which is forecasted to experience physical water



scarcity by the year 2025 with an annual fresh-water availability of less than 1000m<sup>3</sup> per capita, (Otieno & Ochieng, 2004). Despite the provision of the Constitution of Republic of South Africa (1996), the Water Services Act and the National Water Act, concerning the individual rights to have access to clean water in South Africa, it appears that most residents in rural communities continue to experience water shortages and water deficits. In this regard, the Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipality, which is predominantly composed of rural villages, is not immune from this challenge since most individual households do not receive a regular supply of water. In support of these views, Mngadi (2020) states that the South African government has not done much to invest in water and sanitation facilities for communities in remote rural areas. Therefore, aim of this paper is to identify factors that contribute to water scarcity and deficit in the Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipality.

## **2. Conceptual Clarifications**

More often, the concepts, water scarcity and water deficit are used interchangeably as though they carry similar meaning. For this reason, it is imperative to draw a clear distinction between the two key concepts to avoid confusion.

### **2.1 Water Scarcity**

Water scarcity is "the condition that exists when the demographically induced demand for water supply exceeds the prevailing level of local supply, resulting in supply-side augmentation becoming necessary" (Turton & Meissner, 2002:39). Water scarcity is usually referred to as the mismatch between the demand for and supply of water resources, given a predetermined time horizon and spatial scale. Water scarcity is an abstract concept to most people while it remains a stark reality to others. It is the result of myriad environmental, political, economic and social forces (Kharakhonova, 2016). According to the Global Risks Report, 2019, water scarcity is the lack of water resources to meet the standard water demand (World Economic Forum, 2019). Water scarcity is ordinarily caused by droughts, lack of rainfall or population explosion. Water scarcity refers to the imbalance between water availability and the need for water over a specific time period and in a certain region. Water scarcity is limited compared to demand, because water sources are valuable (Wolfe & Brook 2003). Water scarcity is

made up of three levels, namely: First order scarcity stems from actual or perceived inadequacy of supply, given levels of demand that are presumed to be largely if not entirely outside policy control. Second order deals with scarcity of water due to a lack of adaptive capacity. Third order presents scarcity from a political or cultural point of view. In the context of this research project, water scarcity is regarded as a lack of adequate water sources in a specific region while demand for water remains higher within a given timeline.

### **2.2 Water Deficit**

Water deficit is characterised by water losses that exceed the absorption rate and, in this way, it acts directly in the plant-water relations, depending on the intense and exposure period (Fernandez, McInnes & Cothren, 1996). Water deficit is the most single important factor limiting crop yields worldwide that affects plant growth and productivity, (Begg & Turner 1976). Water deficit induces a shift of the expression level of a set of sugar-responsive genes that is indicative of increased rather than decreased availability (Hummel, Pantin, Sulpice, Piques, Rolland, Dauzat, Christophe, Pervent, Bouteille, Stitt & Gibon, 2010). Turton and Meissner (2002) define water deficit as "the prevailing condition that exist when the use of freshwater within a given social entity exceeds the levels of sustainable supply, and the ecological and financial costs of additional supply-side augmentation schemes become questioned by civil society". In the context of this research project, water deficit is simply defined as the mismatch between supply and demand for freshwater in which case the need for increased supply of freshwater becomes unavoidable.

## **3. Theoretical Framework for Water Scarcity and Deficit**

In this research project, a scarcity theory has been adopted to understand and explain water scarcity and deficit. Scarcity theory is broadly recognised as a unified, attractive, and promising view on economic decision making. Scarcity theory "explains several behaviours and decisions of people who face scarcity in a particular area of life" (De Bruijn & Antonides, 2022:6-8) This theory is predicated on the scarcity principle which is predominantly used in the field of economics. Scarcity so central to economics since it explains that resources or commodities for which demand is high would ordinarily exceed

supply (The Investopedia Team, 2023). According to Chen (2020), the scarcity principle is an economic theory that seeks to explain the price relationship between supply and demand for a given resource or commodity. In other words, the scarcity theory should be understood in tandem with the principle of pricing a commodity. The demand for scarce resources that are offered freely tends to exceed the supply (The Investopedia Team, 2023). This explains why the demand for scarce water that is offered freely in most South African rural villages would normally exceed the supply.

While a natural resource such as water is recognised as a scarce commodity with costs and value, such costs are transferred to consumers and taxpayers by government (The Investopedia Team, 2023). When a commodity is increasingly scarce, consumers will have to conduct their own cost-benefit analysis so that they can make informed decision before committing to pay for it. Moreover, a commodity or a resource that is in high demand while there is low supply for it is likely be expensive (Chen, 2020). This explains why the price of water as scarce natural resource rises in areas where there is less supply of this natural resource. At the same time, Chen (2020) highlights the fact that when there is over-supply of a commodity, the demand is like to be lower which implies that prices will reduce making more affordable to consumers. This argument indicates that it is not always possible to achieve a state of equilibrium between demand and supply for a commodity or resource. Therefore, a disequilibrium which is the mismatch between demand and supply would normally occur in which case increased demand for a resource exceeds supply leading to price increases. Although Brown and Wolk (2000:3) question whether the rising prices of natural resources are a true reflection of increased scarcity of such resources, the unfortunate part regarding the increased demand for scarce commodity such as water is that consumers have no other alternative but to pay higher prices to gain access to this natural resource. Nevertheless, The Investopedia Team (2023) argues that scarcity problem can be dealt with by increasing the level of supply of a scarce resource or commodity although such efforts would require additional production capacity and time. In other words, to deal with the problem of water scarcity and deficit, there is a need to ensure increased or unlimited provision thereby building the capacity and infrastructure to achieve sustainable provision of water.

## 4. Research Design and Methodology

A qualitative case study was adopted for the purpose of this research project. In that regard, Meriam (2009) states that case study design maintains a deep connection to core values and intentions that are descriptive and particularistic. Rather than analysing the methods of enquiry used, the research is defined by having an interest in individual cases. In consonant with the chosen research design for the research project, a qualitative research methodology was applied. Holloway and Wheeler (1996) describe qualitative methodology as a method that concentrates on the everyday life of persons, while also being grounded by the conviction that life is socially constructed and acknowledged. The research design and methodology used in this research explains that the interpretivist paradigm which was adopted was not misplaced.

### 4.1 Study Area

The Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipality was chosen as a case study area. Worth noting, the Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipality is a category B municipality situated within the Capricorn District, in the Limpopo Province. The municipality is located 55 kilometres south of the district municipality and Polokwane City. It is the second largest municipality in the district comprising at least eighteen percent of the district population (Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipality, 2020). The municipality is predominately rural and is demarcated into 30 wards. Four of them are located in the township called Lebowakgomo, which is one of the growth points for the Capricorn District Municipality.

### 4.2 Population and Sampling Procedure

Bless, Hingson-Smith and Kagee (2006) stated that the entire set of objects or people, in the area under review is the focus of the research; about which the researcher wants to determine some characteristics about the population. The Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipality has an estimated population of approximately 230,350 people with about 59,682 households. The municipality has thirty (30) wards, which indicates that there are approximately thirty councillors in the municipal council; each representing a ward (Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipality, 2020). The key informants for the study were individuals from households, small business owners and ward councillors within the Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipality.

A total of thirty (30) individuals were sampled. The sample was constituted as follows: ten (10) individuals from different households, ten (10) small business owners, and ten (10) ward councillors were selected from the jurisdiction of the Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipality. A purposive sampling technique was used to select a sample. Selection of participants involved in the study was based on researcher judgements. Purposive sampling technique was found to be a suitable sampling method because it allows researchers to make use of the own judgements in selecting a sample that is composed of aspects that reflect the most attributes of the target population that serve the object of the research project (Strydom & Delpont, 2011). However, this sampling method requires researchers to set unambiguous inclusion and exclusion criteria so that there could be uniformity in terms of selection of research participants. For example, only ward councillors who were serving and residing within the jurisdiction of Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipality were selected. Individuals from various households within the aforementioned municipality were selected while small business owners operating within the jurisdiction of the municipality were selected. In other words, councillors, individuals, and small business owners that are not part of the Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipality were excluded from this study.

### 4.3 Data Collection Method and Analysis

The primary method that was used to collect data from the field is semi-structured interviews. The use of semi-structured interviews was able to allow for an in-depth probing of the participants during one-on-one conversations about the research subject matter. In fact, Nieuwenhuis (2007) accentuates that when using semi-structured interviews, it is essential to remain focused to capture emerging themes during discussions with research participants and possibly to probe further. Most importantly, all research participants were made to feel comfortable before interviews could start. During discussions there was minimal deviations from the questions in the interview schedule to avoid repetitions in terms of responses as some comments made by participants were relevant to some of the questions that were not yet asked. A thematic data analysis method was used to make use of the qualitative data collected through interviews. All interviews were audio recorded during discussions with the research participants; to ensure that reflections

about the views of the participants were accurate. Interviews were transcribed verbatim, and coding was undertaken to identify specific themes pertaining to the issues of water scarcity and deficit. Major themes were identified, and common themes were grouped together.

## 5. Results and Discussion

This section identifies the various factors that contribute to water scarcity and deficit in the Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipality.

### 5.1 Rotational Systems

The findings of this study reveal that one of the factors that contribute to water scarcity and water deficit is the rotational system in terms of water supply in the areas surrounding the Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipality. In that regard, for the municipality to ensure that their communities and businesses are supplied with water, it has decided to share the small amount of water among them via the rotational system. In essence this contributes to water shortage, especially when urban areas within the province and district municipality are given higher preference than rural areas. Some communities applied this with the help of other vendors to obtain water. A participant below shared the following view concerning this matter:

*"Water is rotational here. Besides the water from municipality, as community we did make a plan and now, we use a borehole that Lonemill mine assisted us to use it. They just assisted. You see there is some tanks outside the village, but they are not covering the whole village, only our small area is provided. The water pump machine that is using is suffering because it must only run operate less than eleven hours, as it is assisted by the windmill. The windmill when there is no wind is not functional. It will be good around windy period" (Councillor 4).*

Some of the members of the community raised a concern that a rotational system in terms of water supply has disadvantaged them tremendously. At the same time, it emerged that in some areas of the municipality, water was supplied three times per week, while in other areas, water was supplied only twice a week. In areas where there is an extreme shortage of water, the municipality uses outsourced trucks to supply water. Due to extreme shortages

in some instances, households find themselves in a salutation where they have to purchase water from private suppliers. Members of the community expressed their views as follows:

*"Water comes from Lepelle River where they pump it. We get water three times per week and we store it in tanks and drums and also buy water from donkey carts for R35.00 drum and others charge R50.00 per drum" (Community member 5).*

*"We get water from pipes at the street, each and every street has a pipe and also the households have taps in the yard. We get water two times per week and fill up the drums for storage" (Community member 7).*

*"Yes, we do have a water shortage problem since last year around November. We only get water two times per day, delivered by municipality water trucks" (Community member 8).*

Ndebele and Lavhelani (2017) agree that due to poor service delivery, many municipalities have experienced difficulties in South Africa. Even though the water supply is rotated by the municipality, the rotational system is not consistent, as some areas are given preference in terms of the number of days in which they are supplied with water than others. Nevertheless, it is not yet evident why communities are given preference over others in terms of the number of days in which water is supplied.

## 5.2 Communication Breakdown and Poor Councillor Vigilance

The findings from the study showed that communication breakdown and councillor vigilance, among other factors, contributed to the water shortage in the municipality. Communication was the main problem, as all the participants interviewed acknowledged that there was a water shortage problem in their areas because there was a communication breakdown between the municipality and the residents since the councillor had continuously failed to engage members of the community. The participants were convinced that the councillors were less vigilant and attentive about the challenges facing the residents, especially water shortages. Nevertheless, the issue of communication was raised repeatedly as a major concern. The participants articulated their views as follows when they were asked whether they knew the reasons for

the water shortage:

*"We do not know, because they are not telling us anything. When we asked, they just saying the water is a problem the whole Lepelle-Nkumpi, not Thamagane only" (Business owner 2).*

*"We do not know. The municipality did not tell us anything, even if we talk, we did not get answers" (Business owner 3).*

*"We do not know because nobody tells us anything. There was a contractor here and now we do not know what happened to them" (Business owner 7).*

*"I do not know, as I am saying just because we operate without proper registration there is no need for municipality to take care of us" (Business owner 10).*

In addition to the problem regarding communication, some participants indicated that they did not know their councillors since the residents had last seen them only during the municipal elections. There was no contact between councillors and their constituents. They explained why there were no community meetings to discuss water challenges within the municipality, where residents could make inputs about solutions towards solving their problems. The statements below revealed that some of the participants did not know their ward councillors:

*"I do not know him, if I can have water to use, I will be fine" (Business owner 1).*

*"The councillor is still new, and we will see, but others came and gone without any positive feedback" (Business owner 3).*

*"I do not know because I do not stay here and not able to attend the community meetings" (Business owner 4).*

*"I do not know him, but he stays around. He just says water will be supplied. There are some pipes here, but no water. We do not know when will water come" (Business owner 6).*

*"I do not know him, but he stays at Kurung la Godimo Section" (Business owner 7).*

*"I do not know him, but they talk about them and promised that we will get it" (Business owner 8).*



Councillors did not call any community meetings to inform the communities about the water shortage problems. Instead, they relied on school kids to deliver messages to their parents. Unfortunately, school kids can easily forget, especially around the issue of water, which may not be of great concern to them. If proper communication channels were utilised, the community could be probably sensitised about different ways on how to save or store water. There were times when the water supply returned during the night when everybody was sleeping and, in the morning, when it matters most, the water stops. If there were proper communication channels to convey messages about planned water supply interruptions, community members would possibly be more alert about the schedules and would then plan to accumulate or collect sufficient water for consumption during interruptions. In line with these views, Genc (2017) stated that communication plays a vital role in any sustainable plan or strategy. Therefore, it is important for people to express themselves internally or externally by using appropriate communication modes in order to plan and develop sustainability and sustainable strategies.

### 5.3 Water Pipe Leakages and Burst Pipes

Water was lost through pipe leaks and burst pipes which subsequently affect water supply and also contributes to water shortages in the municipality. Some of the burst pipes were due to the failure by the municipality to maintain the water reticulation systems; because if the water pressures were controlled and monitored, the pipe bursts could be avoided. Sadly, if the leaks are not repaired, the water supply is interrupted. The responses below by participants reflected their views on the matter:

*"All these pipes are going to those dams, they need to pump first, but because of pressure, water cannot reach the dams since the pipes are leaking" (Community member 4).*

*"We do have water taps that are dry because we hardly have water. The taps are dry due to burst pipes a result of excessive water pressure. Pipes burst on several occasions without repairs or fixing" (Community member 5).*

*"Water shortage is sometimes caused by burst water pipes" (Councillor 2).*

Due to water supply interruptions, most areas were affected because water could not reach all the communities. In some areas, due to pipe leaks, the water could not reach the reservoirs. Even though the pipe leaks and burst were reported, the municipality did not take immediate action. Addeji, Hamam, Abe and Abu-Mahfouz (2017), agree that a major challenge to the operational services of water utilities is a water loss caused by leaking pipes. The engineers from the municipality are hardly ever seen in villages fixing the pipe leaks and bursts, which forces the community to take the initiative by trying to do the job by themselves. It is not clear why the townships are given more attention when it comes to fixing leaking or burst pipes, because when a pipe leaks or bursts at the township within twenty-four hours, the problem is solved, whereas when burst pipes are reported in the villages, it takes weeks before damaged pipes are repaired. Sometimes unqualified residents end up taking the initiatives to repair damaged pipes themselves.

However, this results in more frequent leaks and bursts because the job is not done properly. The other pipes that are not underground are exposed to severe weather and children can easily fall. The above findings show that the pipe leaks and bursts contribute to water flow challenges since water is supplied on a rotational basis, it does not cover all the areas, which suggests that people may have to wait for longer periods to receive clean water.

### 5.4 Population Growth

Population growth also contribute to water shortages and deficit problems in a municipality. The water demand also increased, meaning that if the demand is greater than the supply, the problem of water shortages will arise. In some areas, the population has increased exponentially, and the new residential areas were built for the new homeowners. They were RDP houses, meaning that the number of people who apply has risen. This is supported by the statements made by some participants:

*"In some villages, people relied on boreholes, especially in my area; people are drilling their own boreholes. During the former Lebowa government, there were reservoirs, but recently it showed that water supply is not good as the population increases" (Councillor 5).*

*"The Specon Reservoir is the main reservoir in the area, but within the villages there are small reservoirs that get water from Specon to supply the villages. But due to increase in population, Specon cannot cover all the villages" (Councillor 5).*

*"The capacity is small at Lepelle Northern Water, where they pump water. It cannot cover the whole area under the Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipality" (Community member 6).*

*"The reasons are increase in population and the infrastructure that is not developed. Municipality as the provider needs to engage Lepelle Northern Water to pump water into reservoirs" (Councillor 5).*

This finding is consistent with Duh, Shandas, Chang and George's (2008) observation that incredible strain on local, regional and global air and water quality is caused by an upsurge in the global human population and urban development, both of which are increasing at unparalleled speed. Some reservoirs in the Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipality were built several years ago with less population in mind, but new reservoirs were not constructed to match population increases. No one understands why the reservoir capacities were not increased as the population increased. The Specon Reservoir, which is the main source in the municipality supplied the areas with water more than decades ago and now it is still expected to supply the additional newly built residential areas with water, while its capacity remains the same. Instead of increasing the Specon Reservoir capacity, they linked the Polokwane areas to get water from Specon Reservoir.

In some areas, the community took their own initiatives to get water, by using the mining company to assist with the renovation of the old borehole. This did not sit well with the councillor, who threatened the mining company and accused them of not following the right channels. However, because the tribal local authority intervened, the mining company did not leave. People were assisted and had water to drink. These findings indicate the lack of commitment from the municipality when it comes to the water supply. They are aware that the population has increased, but nothing was done to meet the demands for water.

## 5.5 Illegal Water Connections

The findings from the study show that illegal water connections are part of the reason for water

shortages and water deficits in the municipality. The poor service delivery from the municipality leads to illegal connections, because when the population increases, the municipality needs to find a way to ensure that people from the new areas will have water. After community members noticed that the municipality was failing them, they turned towards illegal connections. These illegal connections affect the water supply because the community members do not care. They just connect to any pipe, irrespective of whether it is a main pipeline or not. This is supported by some participants:

*"We have a big problem with the illegal connections and people are tired about these because they affect the flow of water distributions" (Councillor 4).*

*"The only challenge we have is the pipe burst, our pipes are old and need to be replaced. The other challenge is illegal connections that affect water distributions. We only have the meetings to address the issue of illegal connections and appealed to people to stop it, so that everyone can have water" (Councillor 1).*

The municipality needs to address the illegal connections in community gatherings. Water theft is one of the many factors that contribute to the water shortages that a number of communities in South Africa are currently facing. Some of the community members are comfortable with making illegal connections because they know that no prosecution will be pursued against them. Some of the people who connect illegally are sometimes assisted by the pump operator, because it appears as though there is no control or policies put in place by municipalities to regulate water connections. If there is such a policy or regulation in place, then this could mean that members of the community are not aware of it.

The illegal water connections are not reported to anyone, and even if they are reported to councillors or pump operators, no action is taken. It is not yet clear why the local councillors are driving this through the education programmes, because this ongoing challenge has a great negative impact on the flow of water. Sometimes, the main pipe from the Specon Reservoir is hijacked by illegal water connections and this affects a large number of people, because the water will not reach its intended destination. The illegal water connections are costing the municipality a large amount in revenue, while

placing the infrastructure under severe stress. Most of the pipes that are connected illegally burst more often because they are not connected properly. The councillors do not encourage the community to refrain from these acts and report the illegal connections. The community members see the councillors as ordinary citizens, not as municipal employees and that is the reason why they are not afraid of them.

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research project, it is evident that multifarious factors contribute to water scarcity and deficit in the Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipality. The fact that a rotation system is used to cut off water supply in some areas within the municipality is a clear indication of induced water scarcity. While the issue of inconsistent water cut offs was raised sharply as a matter of concern, the municipality should guard against inconsistent provision of water in some areas and neglecting others. In this regard, the municipality will need to review its water cut off schedules. The fact some of the residents find themselves purchasing water from private individuals at exorbitant prices is consistent with the scarcity theory. Communities surrounding the Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipality are not given timely information about water related matters due to communication breakdown between the municipality and the citizenry. This is exacerbated by the fact that some of the ward councillors are not even known to their constituents who they represent in the municipal council. In this regard, the municipality needs to open clear channels of communication with its constituents to relay important information in a timely manner. Failure to maintain the existing water reticulation infrastructure has contributed to water pipe leakages and bursting of pipes leaving the residents without water supply. Delayed responses to water pipe leakages compounded the challenges faced by residents of the municipality. In line with the scarcity theory proposition, the municipality needs to build internal capacity to maintain and service the existing water infrastructure or even constructing new ones. Due to population growth, the demand for water as a scarce resource rises proportionally while the supply is unable to match the demand. This implies that the municipality will need to invest in water infrastructure to increase water supply. Drilling of water boreholes could be one of the considerations that must be taken into account by the municipality. Apart from the factors highlighted above that were reported to be

contributing to water scarcity and deficit, the issue of illegal water connection does not only result in water shortages but causes damage to water infrastructure. The municipality needs to take decisive action against illegal water connections to dissuade damage to water reticulation system. Equally important, the municipality needs to impose heavy fines upon anyone involved in illegal water connections and consider pursuing criminal cases for malicious damage to municipal property.

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# Advancing Gender Mainstreaming and Equity in the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment in South Africa

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**Abstract:** The aim of this paper is to identify strategies that are utilised by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment (DFFE) in pursuit of gender mainstreaming and equity to achieve 50% representation target in the middle and senior management positions. It is not yet clear what measures or strategies are in place within the DFFE to increase the representation of women in the middle and senior management positions. At the same time, it is not yet evident whether the strategies that are used by the DFFE are effective in promoting gender mainstreaming and equity in middle and senior management positions. A liberal feminist theory is applied to explain the significance of gender mainstreaming and equity in the workplace. A qualitative research methodology was used. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted with twenty-five (25) research participants who were selected using purposive sampling technique. The empirical findings show that DFFE uses employment equity plans, targeted recruitment, awareness and information session as well as empowerment and development sessions among others as key strategies to advance gender mainstreaming and equity. This study emphasises the need for continued monitoring and evaluation of set targets to advance gender mainstreaming and equity within the DFFE. This study could be valuable to researchers, academics and practitioners who are interested in understanding gender, diversity and equity issues especially in the workplace.

**Keywords:** Gender, Gender equality, Gender equity, Gender mainstreaming, Equal opportunities

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## 1. Introduction

Female representation in positions of authority within institutions remains inadequate in numerous countries (Commission for Gender Equality, 2013). As a matter of fact, gender equality has become a prominent issue in the development discourse in different countries (Okumu, 2012). Researchers (Phago & Mello, 2007; Kahn & Louw, 2011) agree that historically, women have faced marginalisation and discriminatory treatment, especially in the context of South Africa. South Africa also has its own sordid history on gender related gender matters, where women were deliberately excluded from decision-making positions in the past. The attainment of equal representation became a crucial objective of the public service reform in South Africa (Meyer, 2014). In this sense, the South African government would seek to correct the past injustices against women using appropriate instruments in pursuit of this goal.

A study conducted by the Public Service Commission (PSC) examined gender mainstreaming initiatives and found that the implementation of gender

mainstreaming in most departments across all levels within the public service is unsatisfactory (Bangani & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2020; Public Service Commission, 2006). Stratigaki (2005) points out that the objective of gender mainstreaming is to reshape mainstream policies by integrating a gender equality perspective. Worth noting, the 2017/2018 Annual Report on Employment Equity by the Department of Public Service and Administration highlights those women in senior management accounted for 5% in 1995 but increased to 41% in 2018 (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2018:37). South Africa has approximately 151 government departments both national and provincial, and only 39 departments met the 50% representation of women in senior management (Department of Public Service and Administration, 2023). The Department of Public Service and Administration (2023) further indicate that as of March 2022, there were 9 291 filled senior management positions of which 4119 (44.3%) were filled by women and 5 172 (55.7%) were filled by men. This means there is a higher representation of male senior managers in the public sector than female senior managers. However, it also highlights that the number of

women in the senior management service (SMS) still falls short of achieving the 50% employment equity target. Unfortunately, the Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment (DFFE) was among the South African government departments that failed to achieve 50% representation of women in senior management positions. This raises a concern about the strategies utilised by the department to attain gender mainstreaming and equity as well as the efficacy of such strategies. For these reasons, the aim of this paper is to identify strategies that are utilised by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment (DFFE) in pursuit of gender mainstreaming and equity, thus, to achieve 50% representation target in the middle and senior management positions.

## 2. Theoretical Framework on Gender Mainstreaming and Equity

Liberal feminism was adopted as a theoretical framework to understand gender mainstreaming and equity. According to Mokhele (2016), liberal feminism emerged during the 1950s and is associated with the second wave of feminism. This wave addressed women's unequal access to legal, social, political, and economic institutions. Jones and Budig (2008) explain that liberal feminism advocates for women's equal rights under the law and their participation in public spheres such as education, politics, and employment. Moreover, Lay and Daley (2007) point out that liberal feminism perceives women's oppression as a distinct social phenomenon. Basically, the liberal feminism requires that women should be emancipated from the shackles of marginalisation in all spheres of life.

Liberal feminism is characterised by an individualistic emphasis on equality (Enyew & Mihrete, 2018). Nienaber and Moraka (2016) posit that liberal feminism focuses its attention on visible sources of gender discrimination like gendered job markets and inequitable wage scales while making it possible for women to attain positions of authority as their male counterparts. Ghofatti and Medini (2015) note further that liberal feminism focuses on achieving equality between men and women. Liberal feminist theories of gender equality assume that for women to achieve equal status, all stereotyped social roles for men and women must be abolished (Kanjere & Rachidi 2014). In other words, a conducive environment for the emancipation of women should be deliberately created to attain

successful gender mainstreaming and equity in the workplace.

Nienaber and Moraka (2016) argue that the belief in intrinsic differences between women and men cannot be overcome solely through liberal feminism. For example, in South Africa, the implementation of employment equity has introduced crucial strategies to address barriers and promote equal opportunities and treatment for both genders in the workplace. While women's employment in the public sector has increased, the gap between men and women is widening, favouring women, and resulting in women constituting over 50% of all public servants (Department of Women, Youth, and Persons with Disabilities, 2019). It is notable that liberal feminism emphasises the importance of human rights, equal opportunities, equal treatment, and eradicating oppression. It contends that women and men are equally valuable beings who should enjoy equal representation, treatment, and opportunities in education and employment. Liberal feminists aim to challenge patriarchal societal structures by advocating for women's inclusion in decision-making processes. In this way, they promote gender mainstreaming and seek gender equity within institutions. Moreover, liberal feminism recognises the interests of both women and men, striving for equal benefits for all individuals regardless of gender, sexual orientation, pregnancy, or marital status. In essence, liberal feminism prioritises pursuing social, academic, political, and economic equality between men and women. However, the liberal feminism is criticised heavily for seeking to protect and advance the rights of white females since its proponents tend to remain silent on gender issues that affect non-whites. Further, liberal feminism tends to ignore the magnitude of struggles faced by women in general thereby portraying women as superheroes who are capable of handling work, marriage and motherhood demands (Guy-Evans, 2023).

## 3. Research Design and Methodology

This research paper was conducted on gender mainstreaming and equity practices in the DFFE in South Africa, which employs a qualitative case study research design. In this regard, data was collected through semi-structured interviews with senior managers and middle managers in various directorates of the institution. In selecting the interview sample, a purposive or judgmental sampling strategy was utilised to select a suitable

sample of individuals with in-depth understanding of the gender mainstreaming and equity. Based on purposive sampling technique, a clear inclusion and exclusion criteria was set in which case a total sample of 25 managers was selected for interviews. Specifically, 10 senior managers and 15 middle managers were selected to be part of the study.

Prior to the interviews, the research participants were sent letters inviting them to participate in the study. These letters explained the aim of the research project, and a copy of the semi-structured interview questions was sent to them. The telephone calls were made to establish whether they were willing to contribute to the research project, and appointments were made to conduct the interviews. This explains that participation in the research project was voluntary, and the participants were free to withdraw their participation at any point prior to conclusion of the interview process. Research ethics certification was issued by the Department of Public Administration and Management at the University of South Africa as per reference number: PAM/2021/027.

Thematic discourse analysis was used to analyse data collected through interviews with managers. Moreover, data collected through interviews were analysed soon after each interview to identify common themes flowing from the discussions. As Abdullah (2009:15) suggests, it is possible to ensure that the researcher does not misinterpret the data thereby applying the inductive process look for common themes that emerge from the data while the deductive process is used to complement the inductive approach. The interpretivist research paradigm was adopted which aligned well with qualitative methodology used in this research project. Moreover, as part of the analytical process, major themes were identified as well as the sub-themes which were later infused to with common themes.

## 4. Results and Discussion

This section identifies and appraises the strategies utilised by the South African Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment to achieve gender mainstreaming and equity in middle and senior management positions. The findings from this study are arranged into the following six thematic areas relating to gender mainstreaming and equity in the middle and senior management positions of the Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment.

### 4.1 Implementation of Employment Equity Plan

While the participants indicated that the department is improving in terms of the targets for employment equity. Most participants appreciated the employment equity plan is one of the strategies the department uses to advance the equitable representation of the workforce. The participants felt that the recent implementation of the employment equity plan with clear targets has yielded the desired results, particularly for women in the senior management positions. According to the participants, the improvement also reflects in the monthly, quarterly, biannual, and annual reports. In their responses, they said:

*"With our employment equity plan, the targets of women on the SMS level have improved. The department is currently doing, and we are currently at 44% which is far better than other departments in terms of women in SMS positions" (MMS P7).*

*"The evidence is there when we look at our reports, the stats that we report on quarterly, bi-annually, or annually, you can see that there is an upward swing and to be frank, if you look at our statistics or the employment equity plans or the targets that we have, we almost got 50% for all senior management and middle management. When it comes to filling positions on a 50/50 basis level, we give to the females on all the other levels, specifically on Middle management and senior management opportunities. We are already even above that target as we continue meeting our targets to make sure that there is parity and equal opportunity. At some point we are even doing over and above, so we try to continuously, evaluate and monitor" (SMS P5).*

*"There are employment equity targets set by the department as and when they conduct the recruitment process. By that I mean there is one that the transformation unit uses to set the targets to ensure that all sections comply. For example, we have 50% women SMS level, and the department has been working towards the gender programme, however, achieving women in senior management has been a challenge." (SMS P1).*

*"Employment equity plan has always been the plan, but it was not necessarily enforced so some of these two strategies have existed in the department but were not enforced which is the opposite*

*of what is currently happening. We also had the gender mainstreaming committee previously and I do not think it still exists" (MMS P7).*

One of the participants expressed that the issue of the strategies for equitable representation does not operate internally only, the department has external sector targets that they need to abide by, which include international treaties. SMS 7 explained the following:

*"Internally we are aligning ourselves with the gender Equality strategic framework of the DPSA and internally we also have our gender policy. For example, internally we have an employment equity plan and externally in terms of the sector, we have a gender strategy in the environment and making sure that we align ourselves with work that Gender Commission is doing. We are looking at all policies of the government as driven by the Department of Women. We also align ourselves with international conventions. Those are the strategies that we are utilising" (SMS P7).*

Within this narrative, the majority of the participants believe that the department has an employment equity plan, which is one of the strategies for the achievement of believe that the employment equity plan, which is one of the strategies for achieving the set employment equity targets. Some participants were not sure of the percentage of women in senior management. Others think that the targets have been reached whereas others, demonstrated that there is still a gap in reaching the target, but they have embraced that the department is performing better. They indicated that the targets are used during the recruitment process and are being used to determine the targeted group required to obtain equal representation. This finding is consistent with Ramoroka's (2010) argument that the employment equity plan helps institutions achieve equitable representation for men and women.

The participants further revealed that the Deputy Director Generals have employment equity targets as a key performance area in their performance agreements. They are being assessed on the achievements bi-annually. This strategy has yielded improved results. Although other participants thought that the employment equity plan was there without the desired outcome, most of the participants agreed that there is an improvement. The participants were not aware of the sector targets that one of

the participants mentioned, their responses were solely on the internal targets in line with the employment equity targets. This is supported by Raletsemo (2020), who contends that gender planning refers to a systematic effort to develop specific interventions to promote gender equity in the workplace. Therefore this systematic effort needs to be known by the employees. Moreover, all employees in the organisation must become aware of the employment equity plan, targets, and objectives.

#### 4.2 Targeted Recruitment

Building on the above discussion related to the employment equity targets, the participants indicated that the department uses targeted recruitment as one of the strategies to pay attention to specific positions to fill them within a certain period. Targeted recruitment is a strategy that assists the organisation to ring-fence certain positions to address the gaps identified. Following the comments below, there is a sense that the representation of women in senior management was below the required targets, hence there was a stream of appointments of more women in top management positions. The participants responded as follows:

*"I think, in terms of currently where the department is, I would say, they are effective as I've indicated to you that the top senior management is mostly women, the Deputy Director-General levels, the Director-General is a woman, and most of the positions as we fill them, we are targeting women to make sure that we balance the targets. It is effective because, in every recruitment activity at senior management, middle management, the focus is on women to ensure that there is a balance in gender" (MMS P1).*

*"I think in the year 2020, 2021, we have seen much improvement of women being appointed at senior management. For example, the top level of Deputy Director-Generals are mostly women, with one or two positions remaining to be filled, but mostly all the Deputy Director-Generals are females. it shows that the impression that is now created is that the leadership here is willing to, you know, balance the imbalances of the past in supporting women to apply for senior management positions. I think in the middle management positions also there is much improvement as well that women are now been allowed to apply for those positions. Historically, these are more, you know, prevalent*



*in those positions of management. for now, it is to balance the gender by appointing more females to balance. Employment equity targets are being used to address those imbalances, so the department is following the employment equity, whether it is the policy or is government's aim and goals to make sure that there is agenda imbalanced in terms of giving preference to women. So currently, the employment equity targets or strategies or policies, the one that has been applied to cover" (MMS P1).*

One of the factors that emerged was that the department had targeted top management positions for women. As a result, the department had increased the representation of women at the top management. There is a significant improvement in terms of women in senior management. This reflects a good representation of the achievement of gender balance. The participants highlighted that the Minister, Director-General, and most Deputy Director-Generals are females. In addition, the European Institution of Gender Equality (2016) indicate that gender analysis identifies the differences between and among women and men in terms of their relative position in the organisations. Therefore, where the gap is identified, it should be closed by implementing strategies like earmarking positions.

In the same breath, a participant indicated that although there is an improvement in terms of the appointment, however, some of the programmes that advance gender mainstreaming were no longer being seen in the department. The other participants felt that the positions are being targeted to extent that they are not advertised; instead, positions are filled immediately. In their views, they said:

*"I think within our department the department is solely striving in achieving equality between women and men as compared to the previous years. I have noticed that there have been more appointments done on the senior management level including executive and those positions have been filled by women, so we have partially been implementing the employment equity targets. However, in the past there had more awareness and initiatives on gender mainstreaming which I see very less of. For example, previously there were things like 'bring a child to work' which I do not see that it is being done anymore" (MMS P7).*

*"In my view, like recently we have a new minister and when a position is vacant immediately, it is*

*being filled, immediately without even us noticing that this person has left that is my observation and like in senior management positions like from Deputy Director-General and upwards and Chief director, immediately, those men and women are replaced and those are women. It is something that I see. Nevertheless, it is a strategy that the minister, top management have adopted. It will also contribute to resistance to gender mainstreaming and equity and influences gender representation correctly" (MMS P2)*

From the responses above, the programmes that enhance gender mainstreaming are implemented minimally, which may contribute to the broader implementation of the gender mainstreaming programmes in the department. Although targeted recruitment is important, some elements of awareness programmes become critical in the gender mainstreaming space. This agrees with what Bangani and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2020) emphasised, by indicating that once there is an implementation of gender mainstreaming, it should be followed by gender awareness and diversity issues to maintain gender sensitivity in the workplace. This is key, particularly for accepting women in leadership roles, leading men.

#### **4.3 Awareness and Information Sharing Sessions**

From the responses of the participants awareness and information-sharing sessions have been highlighted as part of the strategies to achieve gender mainstreaming. Awareness sessions are made to improve and enhance gender relations for men and women as it recognises that the needs, concerns, interests, and priorities of men and women may sometimes differ within the organisation. Gender inequality in the workplace has been a widespread problem and some employees believe that gender mainstreaming and employment equality favours women more than men. Participants agreed that men should be involved in the awareness sessions so that they may understand gender mainstreaming. The participants view the awareness programme as an empowerment contributor to gender awareness and a strategy to achieve gender mainstreaming. Their responses were as follows:

*"What is critical is to create awareness on gender mainstreaming, provide the necessary training and empowerment of those leaders that are critical in*

*implementing programmes and projects in line with our core business. It becomes imperative that senior managers are trained on gender mainstreaming. The other thing is that in terms of the planning of strategies and the annual plans of the department at least those programmes must be gendered" (SMS P7).*

*"I think the department is doing good by ensuring that they continue creating awareness on the importance of gender mainstreaming. I think one of the things is in the leadership that had set an example that they can bring balance about gender mainstreaming. Most of our executive managers, I think 90% are female which shows how our leadership looks forward to changing these. Yes, we have not reached the targets about females at the senior management level. However, I believe that about females we are there, and they are pushing because I could hear the leadership pushing managers to pay attention when they are doing the recruitment so they could consider females in the senior management positions" (SMS P9).*

*"I think raising awareness and the ring-fence of the positions. They have the authority. When you must appoint because the submission must go to the highest person. They are raising awareness for men and women to understand the importance of equity and the contents of understanding mainstreaming gender in their programmes and project. When implementing programmes out there to the community and staff, they should bring the element of gender into implementation. Raising awareness will be one of the factors that will influence gender equity" (MMS P3).*

Several awareness sessions can be offered in the organisation for information sharing to sensitise the employees to understand gender mainstreaming and equity programmes better. Gender awareness should not be a once-off event, but a part of the organisation's practice, policies, and procedures. In this context, Raletsemo (2020) argues that organisations need to note this context. Further, Raletsemo (2020) contends that institutions must commit to taking gender issues seriously and develop gender awareness and gender-sensitive programmes.

#### **4.4 Obtain Buy-In From Top Management**

The participants reflected on the importance of the regular involvement of the key actors and

decision-makers in gender issues. If the implementers can obtain buy-in from the top management, it becomes easier to achieve gender mainstreaming in the organisation. Bankhuis (2019) agrees with the participants by indicating that in line with the theory on critical success factors for the implementation of general policies political will is important for the successful implementation of gender mainstreaming as well. The participants hold a view that leadership influences gender issues, which has contributed positively to the improvement of gender representation. The participants agree that gaining support from upper management is a promising tactic for advancing gender mainstreaming and equity in the workplace. According to some participants there is a buy-in from the high level, in their responses they indicated the following:

*"I think buy-in from the top management, that is especially important. Because I know how things are done especially if the instructions are from the top, but I think even if this target is not being achieved, I feel like somebody at the top is hoping things will just happen. But without any action plan, I think nothing will happen. there must be an action plan which must cascade down in terms of what needs to be done to achieve this target. the action plan is especially important and al they must put timelines. That is possible to achieve" (MMS P5).*

*"Firstly, is management buy-in. Secondly, it is clear policies with annual targets help you say, if you aim to achieve 50% in the next 5 years, what are the building blocks you put in place to get to 50%, right? You also must incorporate the element of the frequency of reporting at your strategic management meetings. Those are important because you the able to keep your top management team abreast of efforts that you have taken to ensure that you meet the targets. if there are any challenges, we will be able to identify those challenges early in the process" (SMS P4).*

*"They can make it effective by making men and women aware. Awareness, communication, and the important part is, getting buy-in from senior managers because so far, working in silos and you are working in one department is not going to assist. That is why it goes back to that point, men and women in this department are busy and performance driven. Everyone is looking at the KPA and the quarters that need to be achieved.*

*So that is why that part of buy-in from senior managers is important so that men and women can still understand within corporate management services that those things are also important for the department" (MMS P5).*

The views above held by these participants made it clear that top management buy-in is particularly significant when dealing with gender issues becomes easy to implement if the management supports it. If the management supports it, it becomes easy to implement from the grassroots level. indicate that "Leadership should make a public commitment to gender mainstreaming, realign their organisational mission statement accordingly and communicate this effectively to staff" (Bankhuis, 2019:25) They mentioned that things become better implemented when the instructions come from above. In this sense, it is demonstrated that there is top management buy-in, hence there is an improvement in the numbers.

According to the participants, there is a need for an action plan that cascades down for each employee to understand the department's goals. European Institution for Gender Equality (2016:12) confirms that gender mainstreaming is a top-down technique, indicating that the "top" of an organisation is accountable for establishing accountability for its implementation. The discussions also demonstrated the importance of the action plans, including the feasible deadlines for what to accomplish. Secondly, they demonstrated that the annual targets are crystal clear and enable the department to determine whether they will be achieved. With top management support, it becomes easy to implement any strategy and achieve the necessary results. This is in line with Bankhuis' (2019) argument that when leadership commits to gender mainstreaming, they may create legitimacy for the organisation to implement gender mainstreaming and allocate resources to do so.

#### **4.5 Empowerment and Development Programme**

Participants believed that capacity-building programmes meant for women in middle management will make them prepared for decision-making positions because when they get into those levels, they would not struggle. Some ideas they mentioned were the need to intensify bursaries' acting capacity, mentoring, and coaching programme opportunities. In their responses, they indicated the following:

*"The department has women in leadership programmes. there is an effort to try and expose women to leadership programmes and other kinds of educational programmes that can enhance their capacity and qualifications. I know that the department does a coaching programme for which many women are beneficiaries. I know some kinds of women's conversations are on topics affecting women or gender-based violence and related issues. I know we have an equity plan which outlines what ought to be in the representation of women in senior management positions. We have the same commitment plan on the department's strategic plan and the department's annual performance plan. Moreover, we put the same commitment on the performance agreement of the DG and the performance agreement of the DDGs. So those are some of the interventions and approaches, one towards gender mainstreaming and towards achieving our equity targets about women" (SMS P2).*

*"I think it can play a significant role in achieving that or those two objectives. Because when you coach, when you mentor and when you invest a lot of time in developing men and women, they to some extent also gain some level of confidence to say, I think I am in a better space because I'm being coached to behave a particular way as well as to understand what is for me in the future. Do you know what as we are talking now, I am also thinking about something else, but I am not sure if it might come up again in your questions which is related to the part of the strategy that I am thinking can even contribute. Is that aspect where managers who are responsible for employing men and women or maybe not managers who are responsible for employing men and women but managers, in general, must contract and commit to having these targets as part of their performance agreements and to some extent take accountability for implementing these targets. If they are not implementing these targets, there must be consequences around those. I do not what form of punishment or penalty will they get but there must be a strategy that looks at managers committing to these things and ensuring that they do happen and if they do not happen then they must face the consequences for it" (MMS P4).*

Another participant pointed out that aligning the department's mainstreaming strategy, which aims to integrate gender equality considerations,

with the overall departmental strategy is crucial. However, this alignment can be challenging if there is a disconnect between different plans, such as the departmental annual performance plan. To effectively promote gender equality, it is important for the annual performance plan to focus on mainstreaming efforts. Without this alignment, other programmes and initiatives may not effectively contribute to achieving gender equality goals. In the response, the participant mentioned the following:

*Capacity development, including training programmes, plays a positive role in preparing men and women for higher-level positions. When both genders receive training in the environmental sector, it can contribute to poverty alleviation, particularly for women with significant family responsibilities. The success of capacity development programmes lies in ensuring the equal participation of women and men at all levels. Implementing an employment equity plan can yield positive outcomes if there are no gaps in implementation and everyone interprets and understands the plan the same way. Representing employees from various occupational categories and involving organised labour in the equity committee can amplify the voices of affected men and women. Aligning the department's mainstreaming strategy with the overall departmental strategy is important. However, it can be challenging if there is a disconnect between plans, such as the departmental annual performance plan (APP), which should clearly focus on mainstreaming. Without this alignment, other programmes may not effectively promote gender equality. Therefore, integrating mainstreaming efforts into the APP and ensuring it is important at the strategic level can significantly contribute to achieving gender equality (MMS P3).*

In the discussions above, empowerment and capacity development for women, particularly in middle management, is crucial to prepare women for senior management positions. Furthermore, training and gender analysis tools could contribute to the technical capacity of organisational and project staff as well (Bankhuis, 2019; Mehra & Gupta, 2006). This is in consonant with the Mekwa's (2012) remark that capacity-building interventions for the training and development of females in the public service, such as on-job training and accelerated training for recruits are of critical importance. They mentioned strategies such as acting capacity, bursaries, and

training as some of the development capacities that contribute positively women to preparation for managerial positions. In addition, Bangani and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2020) argue that all public service departments must ensure that capacity-building interventions are in place for gender equality and women's empowerment.

#### 4.6 Involve Men as Active Partners

In the discussions, the participants highlighted the importance of having men as active partners in gender mainstreaming and gender equity programmes. The collaboration provides an engagement for both partners to find common ground in addressing the issues of gender attitudes, equality, and inclusion. Some participants viewed gender mainstreaming as a programme for women only, whereas others acknowledged the importance of involving men in all the programmes, moreover creating awareness among males about gender mainstreaming. The participants expressed their views as follows:

*"We come far from where there has been an imbalance about gender mainstreaming. I think creating awareness plays a key role, especially for males can understand gender mainstreaming and equity. For me, the most important thing is understanding. If we understand gender mainstreaming and equity, we will help the department to achieve its targets. If we do not understand it is a waste of time. We also need to start at a root level, we might now focus on 50% of SMS, but what about the middle managers and what about the lower levels if you have a long term of wanting to see this thing implemented and balanced you need to plan for the lower level and middle level. Because we might achieve 50% on the senior managers, you may find that we have opened a huge gap in lower levels. And for us to bring a balance, there would be a time now when most of the senior managers would go to retirement and we do not have the ones we have groomed for the next level. Then we will go back and talk about women's empowerment in the SMS. It should be a process, to say yes, we have achieved this and ask ourselves how we will maintain and sustain the achieved targets" (SMS P9).*

*"In my own opinion, I think it is a societal issue more than an organisation so it will require a total mindset here. We can run awareness sessions that*



*are more relaxed and invite everybody not only women because I do not want to leave gender balance not only women, but we can have this dialogue with everybody involved not just a dialogue that is like a women's dialogue, and then pick up there because I don't know how you feel if I am a man when I do something. I would wait for you to say, I would not say I like it, or I like it and as a man, I need to be comfortable without worrying that I might offend you. I think if we have this dialogue. We have gender dialogue, but then currently separate the dialogs, we have a women's dialogue and men's dialog together that we never get to the stage where we let us group all of us let us have mutual understanding on gender based as an example let's have a mutual understanding of different example, sexual harassment. the fact that we still separate means, there is a part that we are missing but if we converge, we then overlap and that part that we are overlapping will be our sweet spot because we will both understand how the other feels" (MMS P14).*

The participants mentioned that it is important to involve all genders and have conversations with them not simply thinking about gender mainstreaming as a women's issue. This argument agrees with Flood and Holmes' (2013) notion that men play a critical role as strategic partners in the gender awareness process. They demonstrated the importance of having males as partners in this regard, by having both women and men forums and dialogues to discuss gender issues. Participants acknowledged that society played a role in how women are viewed in leadership positions. However, they emphasised the importance of having all groups gathered to have a mutual understanding of gender-based issues or different issues, such as sexual harassment. The participants felt that if the department promotes gender mainstreaming as women's issues, they will leave men behind. It would be difficult for them to understand that gender mainstreaming is for both genders.

## **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

Based on the empirical findings from the field, it is evident that the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment has clear strategies in place to pursue gender mainstreaming and equity. Nevertheless, the efficacy of the strategies identified are not yet obvious because the aforementioned department is still among South African

departments that are struggling to achieve 50% women representation in the middle and senior management positions. While the department uses targeted recruitment to fill senior and middle management positions, this will require the institution to put measures in place to ensure that nepotism or abuse of authority does not occur. In other words, qualified, experienced, knowledgeable and competent individuals should be targeted to fill these managerial positions. The ultimate goal should not be filling positions to satisfy quantitative target but to appoint suitably qualified individuals. Awareness and information sharing sessions are important avenues for promoting gender mainstreaming and equity. It is through these sessions that the department can be able to deal with issues of possible resistance to gender mainstreaming and equity. The department needs to ensure that various stakeholders are involved in awareness and information sharing campaigns.

The use of empowerment and development programmes to capacitate women in the department so that they could be able to fill positions that were previous filled by men is commendable. This approach is consistent with the liberal feminist theory which argues that women should be afforded equal opportunities as their male counterparts. Indeed, this can be realised through the implementation of empowerment programmes that target female employees. Since the department is still unable to achieve the 50% representation targets of female employees in middle and senior management positions, the department should ensure that the implementation of gender mainstreaming and employment equity measures are monitored consistently. Additionally, the evaluation of these measures must take place to determine their effectiveness. If the evaluation proves that some of the strategies could be outdated and not suitable for achieving desired goals or targets, they should be replaced immediately with new ones. Equally important, the department should strive to build capacity to implement the current strategies in pursuit of female representation in top management positions. In particular, the current employment equity and gender mainstreaming champions should be capacitated to implement current strategies. This approach could work far better if the department takes decisive efforts to create an enabling environment thereby introduction of policies that would positively contribute towards the attainment of gender mainstreaming and equity targets.

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# An Analysis of the Effectiveness of Public Procurement Policies in Curbing Corruption in Public Sector Organisations in South Africa

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**Abstract:** Public procurement plays a pivotal role in driving economic activities. However, corruption also negatively impacts the procurement of public goods and services. The aim of this study is to determine the causes of corruption in public procurement in selected South African (SA) public sector organisations and suggest solutions. A case study and a mixed-methods research approach entailing both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies was adopted. An exploratory and descriptive research design was also deemed necessary for the purpose of the study. A purposive sample of 25 public sector organisations in the Western Cape was identified. Data was collected via questionnaires, interviews and documents. The findings of the study revealed that public sector organisations in SA encounter various challenges that impact the implementation of public procurement policies, such as the lack of internal control measures, non-adherence to procurement policies, poor procurement implementation processes, ethical lapses, political interference and governance failures. Based on the findings, recommendations include increasing levels of deterrents to corruption and adoption of strategies such as strengthening internal control measures, simplifying anti-corruption policies and legislation and protections for 'whistleblowing'. These recommendations can apply to other public sector organisations, both in SA, and abroad.

**Keywords:** Public Procurement, Corruption, Governance, Ethics, Whistleblowing

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## 1. Introduction

In South Africa (SA), public procurement spending formed 15% of GDP in the Financial Year 2021/2022. Although national government is the largest purchaser of good and services, (24%) local and provincial governments and State Owned Enterprises (e.g. Eskom and Transnet), each form about 25% respectively of public procurement expenditure. A succinct definition of procurement is given by Grandia *et al.* (2023), who define public procurement as the acquisition of works, supplies, or services by government or public organizations from the market or another outside body, while simultaneously creating and safeguarding public value from the perspective of their own organisations. Public procurement is a complex function and can be described as the supply chain system for the acquisition of all necessary goods and services by the state acting in pursuit of the public interest. However, in SA public procurement is highly decentralized at the institutional level. Each government entity has significant latitude to decide how it procures the goods, services it needs to carry out its functions, while legislation is highly fragmented with

over 80 different legal instruments governing public sector procurement along with accompanying regulations making compliance with procurement requirements burdensome for suppliers (especially for smaller entities). The vulnerability of governments to corruption while engaging in the process of public procurement was identified as far back as the 1860s in America, when significant "waste and squandering", of public funds was first identified, and that "*Overcharging was common, with war contracts awarded without any advertising at exorbitant rates above market value*" (Kohn, 2023).

## 2. Literature Review

Ethical procurement relies on an adherence to principles to proactively apply principles of loyalty and respect for rules and regulations, integrity, impartiality and fairness, transparency, confidentiality, avoidance of the appearance of impropriety and due diligence in the supply chain processes. However, according to Pillay *et al.* (2023), corruption in the African public sector can occur through "*bribery, embezzlement, nepotism, favouritism and procurement fraud*" (Pillay, 2023:4). Corruption

can arise because of poorly formulated policies or inefficient measures intended to limit the possibility of bribes or collusion from individuals to commit wrongdoing in public procurement. Khan, *et al.* (2019) contended that corruption is intimately linked to a lack of enforcement of the rule of law.

The manifestations of unethical procurement are described by Mazibuko and Fourie (2017), including "*uncompetitive bidding, and inadequate contract management... non-disclosure [of interests] by suppliers... or using incorrect preferential point systems and thresholds to which can be added falsification of supporting documents stipulated during the tender compliance process for award of procurement contracts and acceptance of cheaper, but sub-standard goods or services or even when outside suppliers that are formally or informally involved in drawing up specifications,*" (see further Mazibuko & Fourie, 2017). Corruption in public procurement is a complicated phenomenon that can occur at any stage of the procurement process. Risk assessments conducted by internationally recognized consultancies indicate that corruption during the procurement process is the second most reported global economic crime. One of alleged causes of corruption in the public sector environment is political interference (Aleyomi, 2020). In particular, while administrative processes have the potential to curb corruption, they are not always effective to implement control measures.

According to Williams-Elegbe (2018), in developing countries, (such as SA) "*procurement corruption is rife due also to institutional weaknesses, the lack of enforced accountability mechanisms, and a culture of silence in relation to public sector malfeasance.*" Sayeed (2023) analyses corruption in South Africa's public sector and concludes that not only is there an inextricable link between poverty and corruption, but that governance failures also encourage corruption and weaken institutions, a finding confirmed by commentators on the Zondo Commission of Inquiry, (see further two recent synopses of the Commission's deliberations by commentators such as Holden (2023) and Haffajee (2023). The challenge for SA is to ensure accountability, transparency and application of the rule of law. The Zondo Commission's recommendations include professionalizing board appointments to state-owned enterprises, preventing cabinet ministers from appointing political unqualified or compromised persons and critically, and upskilling civil service and local government procurement officials (Gottschalk, 2023).

### 3. Research Methodology

The study was conducted at 25 Western Cape public sector organizations. The research aimed to assess the effectiveness of the public procurement policy in curbing corruption. A mixed-method approach was employed, using interviews and survey questionnaires to achieve this aim. The study aimed to better understand the procurement practitioners' perspectives and experiences with public procurement policies and processes to combat corruption in 25 public sector departments. A purposive sampling method included all procurement practitioners in the selected departments. The full study involved a literature review, documentary analysis, and interviews with the chosen participants.

The data for this study was collected by conducting interviews and distributing questionnaires to procurement managers and practitioners in selected public sector organizations in the Western Cape. The collected data was then analyzed using Atlas.ti for qualitative data and Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for quantitative data. The qualitative and quantitative data sets were extracted, explored and aggregated to identify relationships among emerging themes.

#### 3.1 Research Approach

##### 3.1.1 Quantitative Methods

Research was conducted via an empirical study using interviews and a survey questionnaire. A quantitative approach was used to determine the relationship between the public procurement policy and corruption in SA.

##### 3.1.2 Qualitative Method

During the quantitative phase a survey questionnaire, generated written data on the 'respondents' evaluation via closed-ended questions were directed. Interviews were also conducted with the identified individuals employed in the departments. The responses were received in written form and qualitatively analysed. Besides the semi-structured questions, open-ended questions were included to ascertain the participants' opinions. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim.

##### 3.1.3 Mixed Method Research

The research employed both quantitative and qualitative methods and analyzed them separately to establish if the results were confirmed or otherwise.



Both the collected qualitative and quantitative data were triangulated. Triangulation utilises multiple sources in collecting data for a study, and if an investigation is well triangulated, the study will "contain richness, depth, breadth, complexity and rigour" (Liamputtong, 2016).

### **3.2 Sample**

The purpose of sampling is to select a representative set of individuals from a target population in the Research. A sampling population comprises those final sampling units in the target population with a positive, non-zero probability of being selected as a sample. In this study, the research domain was the public procurement policy in the SA public sector. The sample is drawn from a list of public sector departments and municipalities in the Western Cape. The policy is formulated on the management level. The researcher contends that public procurement managers are therefore the most suitable population from which to gain an understanding of how policies are developed and implemented. The sample strategy of the study was operationalized from a sample drawn from a list of national departments with a regional office, as well as provincial departments and municipalities located in the Western Cape. Considering a specific plan and a defined required data set, the researcher approached the sampling problem with a non-probability sampling method.

#### **3.2.1 Population and Sampling Methods/Design**

The population data of one province, the Western Cape, regarding corruption reporting, was used in the study. The target population of this study comprised 25 public sector supply chain practitioners and managers in 10 Western Cape Municipal Departments (Agriculture, Social Development, Environmental Affairs Development Planning, Human Settlements, Community Safety, Transport and Public Works, Education). Other anti-corruption role players in SA were also included (Offices of the Public Protector, Auditor General, Public Service Commissioner, the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA), the Asset Forfeiture Unit, and the Special Investigation Unit of the NPA), as well as Senior Procurement Managers in the Forensic Investigation Unit (to whom all corruption cases in public procurement are reported) of the Western Cape Parliament.

#### **3.2.2 Interviews**

Following a pilot study to refine the questions and eliminate any ambiguities, face-to-face

semi-structured interviews (comprising questions that emerged from the literature review, the conceptual framework and case study analysis) were conducted to explore the understanding of public procurement and corruption concepts from the interviewees' perspectives. All interviewees held senior or management positions and were responsible for policy development and implementation. The interview guide covered the study objectives, indicating to critically assess whether the public procurement policies of departments include elements aimed at preventing corruption in public procurement, to measure the relationship between corruption and public procurement policy by applying statistical analysis techniques on collected data, and to recommend a public procurement framework for the SA public sector to improve procurement practices and address corruption. The interview questions were constructed around five themes and respondents asked to answer the questions using a five-point Likert scale.

### **3.3 Data Analysis**

The purpose of conducting interviews with the procurement managers was to answer Research Question 1, as shown in Table 1 on the next page. The SPSS Version 26 was used to analyse data and examine the descriptive and disciplinary analysis. For open-ended questions, informal content analysis was used by categorizing similar keywords/themes. The questionnaire survey was also used to collect data. The questionnaires were distributed among all officials working in public procurement domains at the state organs.

The collected data were analyzed using statistical techniques, coding, and theme analysis. During quantitative analysis, the researcher analysed the data based on the questions or hypotheses and used the appropriate statistical test to address the research question. Qualitative data analysis involves coding the data, dividing the text into small units, assigning a label to each unit, and grouping them into codes.

## **4. Ethical Considerations**

Ethics is a crucial concern because this study focused on public sector agencies. Permission was obtained from department heads of all the organizations in the Western Cape, and permission obtained from the respondents before the interviewing process

**Table 1: Research Questions**

Research Question	Research Questions	Responses	Methods
RQ 1 (a)	To what extent have public procurement policies been successful in preventing or curbing corruption?	Opinions of implementation, knowledge, rules and regulations, compliance, accountability, training sanctions and outcomes through open-ended questions.	By conducting the Descriptive Analysis-mode, median and standard deviation.
RQ 2 (a)	What are the reasons that public procurement policies are not able to prevent or curb corruption?	Measure the public procurement policies and to what extent they aim to curb corruption.	Using an informal content analysis technique to look for similar keywords/themes and observations.
RQ 3 (a)	What factors influence the development and implementation of public procurement in a public organization?	Opinions of accountability and transparency through open-ended questions.	Using an informal content analysis technique to look for similar keywords/themes.
RQ 3 (b)	What are the reasons for the significant increase or decrease in corruption in public procurement?	Measure the extent of corruption in the organisation. Respondents were asked about the number and type of corrupt practices in their organisation.	Using an informal content analysis technique to look for similar keywords/themes.
RQ 3 (c)	What systems are used to identify and detect elements of non-compliance in public procurement processes in the SA Government?	Measure of systems and non-compliance to public procurement processes.	By conducting the Descriptive Analysis-mode, median and standard deviation.
RQ 3 (d)	What is the relationship between public procurement policies and corruption?	Measure the strength of the relationship between public procurement policies and corruption.	The bivariate Correlation coefficient, regression, and Multivariate Analysis (SPSS) were used to determine the degree of relationship between public procurement policies and Corruption.

Source: Researchers

in compliance to Unisa's then applicable policy on research ethics rules and moral code of conduct.

## 5. Results

The literature review and data collected highlight how training deficiencies and failure to build capacity have exacerbated non-compliance to, misinterpretation of, and maladministration in public procurement policies. The empirical findings from the study confirmed that the public procurement framework and legislation including policies are fragmented, outdated and vulnerable to different

interpretations which contribute to maladministration and corrupt practices in public sector organisations. Non-adherence to anti-corruption guidelines, lack of risk mitigation strategies and weak enforcement mechanisms prevail in public sector organisations.

The Survey findings in Table 2 on the next page rank the Top 10 factors that the 53 respondents considered most relevant to influencing corruption in public procurement. Experience, transparency, adherence to policies and regulations, knowledge and training are all highly ranked.

**Table 2: Interpretation of Data in Ranked Order Top 10**

Rank	Variable Description	Mean
1	Position in your Organisation	3.62
2	Adherence to stage of procurement as stated in Department's procurement policy	4.55
3	Public Procurement Policy is approved by the Executive	4.36
4	Content knowledge of Preferential Procurement Policy Act	4.57
5	Adherence to regulations, rules, and procedures	4.55
6	Declaration of Interest and Secrecy is a deterrent to combat corruption	4.28
7	Declaration of Interest by Specification, Evaluation, and Adjudication Committees	4.72
8	Commercially sensitive information content bid should not be made public	4.15
9	Mandatory induction training on procurement for all public officials	4.55
10	Number of years' experience in public procurement	3.49

Source: Authors

1. **Position in your Organization.** Respondents consider that those in higher positions have more influence in procurement processes. providing mandatory training on procurement to all public officials
2. **Adherence to stage of procurement as stated in the Department's procurement policy.** Strong adherence to these procedures is seen as crucial in preventing corruption.
3. **Public Procurement Policy is approved.** Executive approval is considered essential for effective procurement.
4. **Content knowledge of Preferential Procurement Policy Act.** Knowledge of PPA crucial in public procurement.
5. **Adherence to regulations, rules, and procedures.** Compliance is considered vital in maintaining transparency and integrity.
6. **Declaration of Interest and Secrecy is a deterrent to combat corruption** in procurement.
7. **Declaration of Interest by Specification, Evaluation, and Adjudication Committees.**
8. **Commercially sensitive information content bid should not be made public.** Safeguarding commercially sensitive information from public disclosure. The relatively high ranking of '*Ethics*' highlights the importance of devoting more time and resources to training in ethics as one part of addressing the problem of corrupt practices.
9. **Mandatory induction training on procurement for all public officials** highlights significance of
10. **Number of years' experience in public procurement.** Years of experience in public procurement relevant. Subsequently, Variance was analysed. Variance is the average of the squared distances from each point to the mean. Variance is a statistical measurement of the spread between numbers in a data set. More specifically, variance measures how far each number in the set is from the mean (average), and thus from every other number in the dataset. In the context of this study, it measures the distance between the means. Therefore, the descriptive statistic table is a guide to determining the distances between each mean. All the components or factors influence each variable and how much of the variance in each variable is explained by these factors. Commonalities of the variable describe how much of the variance in each variable is accounted for. Initially, all variables have an equal chance (1.000) to be part of the extraction process. For illustrative purposes, only the highest ranking 4 variables are included in the Factor Analysis Test. Respondents also highlighted the significance of detecting conflicts of interest, instituting internal

**Table 3: Total Variances**

Total Variance Explained										
Component	Variable	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings			
		Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	Competent and accountable handling of corruption cases	3.547	29.559	29.559	3.547	29.559	29.559	3.346	27.883	27.883
2	Strengthening internal control measures	2.191	18.255	47.814	2.191	18.255	47.814	1.837	15.31	43.193
3	International community involvement	1.28	10.669	58.484	1.28	10.669	58.484	1.633	13.608	56.8
4	Training on ethics	1.145	9.539	68.022	1.145		68.022	1.347	11.222	68.022

Source: Authors

control measures, practicing ethical behaviour, media and social pressures and debarment of suppliers as deterrents to reduce non-compliance in public procurement, supporting the argument of Luo *et al.* (2022), that debarring or disqualifying corrupt suppliers from bidding for, or otherwise obtaining, government contracts significantly inhibits curb public procurement corruption. However, the findings noted that many public sector organisations simply do not adhere to strictures regarding debarment of suppliers. It can be argued that public procurement policy cannot prevent corruption, and other factors should therefore be explored.

It is evident from the data collected that a lack of training and capacity building in the procurement environment is one of the factors contributing to maladministration. The vulnerability contributes not only to the increase of non-compliance to the public procurement policy provisions but also creates a misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the policy procurement policy (PPP) outcomes. As a procurement skill, interpretation of the policy outcomes can be enhanced by training and capability building. Training is also vital in procurement processes because it creates awareness of the reputational implications of corruption.

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The research reveals that corruption in public procurement is complex and cannot be easily eradicated without the clear awareness of anti-corruption policies and the risks – both personally and to corporate reputations – of ignoring them. The research concludes that urgent interventions are required if corruption in public sector procurement is to be curbed in SA. The present research suggests that the addition of international best-practice, the institutionalisation of whistleblowing protections, and incorporation of ethical practices at all stages in the procurement process can all serve to improve the integrity of public procurement in South Africa.

The literature review and empirical evidence demonstrated a need to standardise fragmented public procurement policies and future legislation should consolidate procurement policies for each level of government. Following suggestions of the South African Auditor General, consequence management (punitive actions or fines) by Accounting Officers or Municipal Managers should also be implemented to ensure compliance. According to Odeku (2019), Sihanya and Ngumbi (2020) and Ochieng and Kamau (2021), anti-corruption tools such as the application



of lifestyle audits on all procurement officials (including officers sitting on Bid Specification, Evaluation and Adjudication Committees), are powerful tools to detect illicitly obtained wealth. In an environment susceptible to temptations, enhancing opportunities for government officials to act ethically in the execution of their duties can mitigate risks (Sibanda & Maramura, 2020). Strengthening Whistleblowing protections emerged as promising area. Although specific corporate whistleblower protections exist, the courageous testimonies revealed by individual South African whistleblowers such as De Ruyter (2023), Mothepu (2021), Stimpel (2021), Williams (2021) and narrated by Wiener (2020) are very revealing, if not frightening. Effective whistleblowing mechanisms require 24 hour 'hotlines,' supported by awareness programmes, anonymity, follow-up actions and anti-retaliation protections (ACFE, 2023).

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# Nurturing Sustainable Growth: The Integrated Development Plan and Local Economic Development in the AbaQulusi Local Municipality

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**Abstract:** Over the past two decades, local economic development (LED) has emerged as a pivotal strategy South African local governments employ to promote pro-poor sustainable development. Driven by legislative mandates, local governments are required to formulate integrated development plans (IDPs) that outline their LED objectives. Despite the well-defined policy framework and legislative guidance, there has been a notable absence of substantial local-level growth and development stemming from LED initiatives. Using qualitative data from a study conducted in the AbaQulusi Local Municipality, in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, this paper delves into the integration of these two concepts. It explores their role in addressing good governance, promotion of competitiveness, enterprise development, and the informal economy while linking their impact to inclusive and pro-poor development, and the promotion of public-private partnerships. The findings indicate that the AbaQulusi Local Municipality's current economic trajectory is unsustainable, with poor governance, lack of communication between all stakeholders, stagnated economic growth, and high rates of poverty, unemployment, and inequality. Drawing from the results of this study, the paper underscores the need to combine pro-poor interventions with market-driven strategies that promote economic transformation, support labor-intensive growth in agriculture and tourism sectors, and modernize network industries, such as energy, transport, and telecommunications, to promote competitiveness and inclusive growth.

**Keywords:** Local Economic Development, Integrated Development Plan, AbaQulusi Local Municipality, Sustainable growth, Socio-economic growth

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## 1. Introduction

In the AbaQulusi Local Municipality, situated within the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa, the integrated development plan (IDP) serves as a guiding blueprint for sustainable development and improvement of local living conditions (AbaQulusi Local Municipality, 2022). Central to this plan is the concept of local economic development (LED), which aims to stimulate economic growth, create job opportunities, and enhance the overall well-being of residents. The LED concept is derived from the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) which outlines the role of local government in LED (Government of South Africa, 2018). Sections 152 (c) and 153 (a) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa state that local government must "promote social and economic development" and must "structure and manage its administration, budgeting, and planning processes to give priority to the basic needs of the community, and to promote the social and economic development of the community" (Government of South Africa, 1996:74).

Section B 1.1 of the White Paper on Local Government (1998) elaborates this mandate by stating that "the powers and functions of local government must be exercised in a way that meets basic needs of the poor and the growth of the local economy" (Government of South Africa, 1998:24). In advancing the National Framework on LED, the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA) also notes that it promotes "robust and inclusive local economies that exploit local opportunities to achieve real potential, innovative, competitive, and sustainable advantages in addressing local needs and contributing to national development objectives" (Government of South Africa, 2018: 8). This paper explores the views and experiences of 64 participants in the AbaQulusi Local Municipality on the role of the IDP in facilitating local economic development in the Local Municipality.

The South African government has instituted a range of policies and legislative measures aimed at incentivizing the active engagement of local

authorities in strategies promoting LED. Among these, the most all-encompassing are the IDPs, which impose an imperative upon local governing bodies to align with LED policies (Gunter, 2005). This legislative evolution has catalysed a profound transformation in South Africa's approach to development, underpinned by the global trend towards greater decentralization and transference of power, authority, and resources to subnational levels of government (Nel & Goldman, 2006).

Nonetheless, a widely noted trend is the unequal advancement and implementation of LED throughout South Africa (Rogerson, 2008). Notably, substantial disparities exist in policy establishment, institutional integration of LED, and practical execution between the larger, more resourceful municipalities and the smaller urban and rural counterparts (Rogerson, 2006). It is acknowledged that the effective decentralization of power for implementing LED is hindered due to skill deficiencies in formulating and executing Integrated Development Plans (IDPs), along with insufficient funds and resources to support LED offices, training, and projects in many local municipalities (Nel & Goldman, 2006). Often, these plans serve as little more than aspirational catalogues of objectives that remain elusive due to existing fiscal constraints.

## **2. The Theoretical Framework of the Study: The Sustainable Development Theory**

The sustainable development theory is adopted as the relevant theoretical framework for this study. Sustainable development emphasizes the need for advancing the lives of the citizens living in rural areas and their involvement in economic events that benefit them and their communities. Sustainable development entails "development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their own needs" (UNDP, 2022:2).

A study in Nigeria that employed the sustainable development theory contends that sustainable development in rural areas is achievable through the implementation of political, financial, and administrative independence of the local governments. The authors argue that sustainable growth has developed into a central matter in the economic, social growth, and management of ecological resources of society (Wilson & Idoniboy-Obu, 2019).

Sustainable development is an all-inclusive thought that merges features of environmental, societal, and financial existence concerned with humanity's two huge concerns: the capability to generate and sustain (Duran et al., 2015). It focuses on the availability and sustainability of resources in the current and future generations' best interests. It regards the environment as essential to guard while exploiting these resources. Thus, sustainable development has become necessary in the context of the socio-economic growth of societies, especially those once deprived communities, to ensure that they develop socially and economically while continuing to preserve the environment (Shaker, 2015) (see Figure 1 on the next page).

Broad guidelines for sustainable development have inherent elements, as illustrated by the Global Multidimensional Poverty Index, created by the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Institute (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2022). It focuses on, among other things, learning, health, food, energy, and water supply. These measurements do not just point to the importance drawn from integrating ideas from the development economics and political expert groups, but provide opportunities for fine-tuning specific issues in our local and international societies (UNDP, 2022).

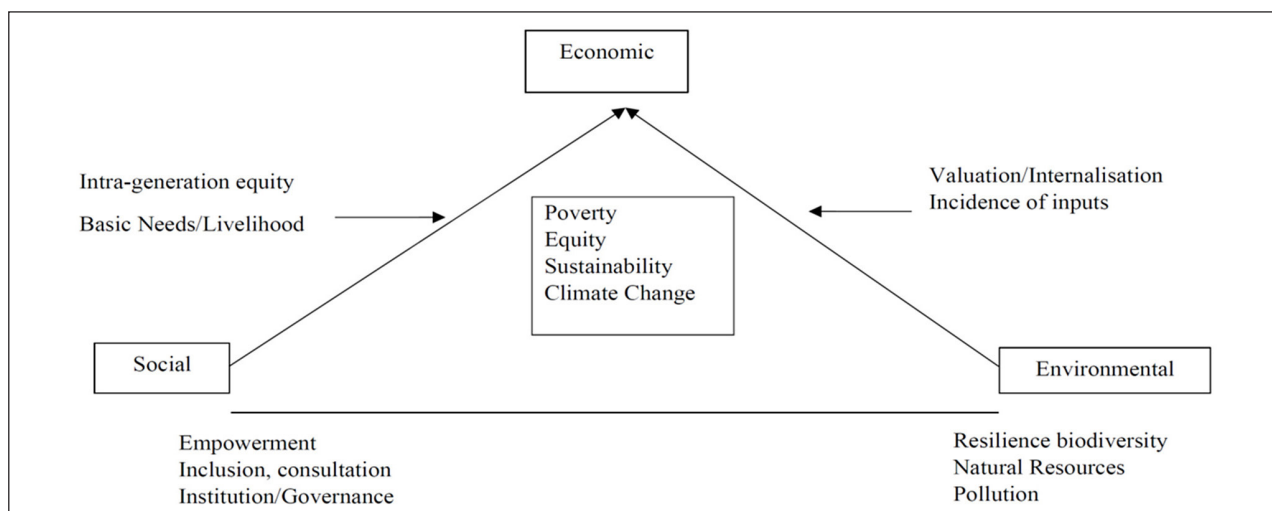
The theory of sustainable development posits that applying its principles in real-life situations leads to several benefits. These include preserving natural resources, safeguarding the environment, boosting the country's economy, fostering community well-being by respecting human rights and promoting peace. This theory is integral to various aspects such as land use, water management, farming practices, building design, energy conservation, education, equal opportunities, and legislation, ensuring progress towards a sustainable society (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2022). In this study, the Abaqulusi Local Municipality should seek to efficiently exploit the available resources, bringing about present sustainable growth in the communities it serves and for future generations.

## **3. Methods**

Employing a case study approach, this qualitative research explores how stakeholders assess the implementation of Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) in Abaqulusi Local Municipality, encompassing



**Figure 1: The Objectives of Sustainable Development**



Source: Adapted from Duran et al. (2015)

diverse settlements like coal mining, cattle ranching, and urban zones, with Vryheid Town as the primary center. Other areas covered by AbaQulusi include Louwsburg, eMondlo, Hlobane, Coronation and Bhekuzulu. The municipality is divided into 23 Wards, covering approximately 4185km<sup>2</sup>, and housing around 243,795 people. Through purposive and snowball sampling, 64 participants took part, including community members, officials, leaders, private sector representatives, and councilors. Data was collected via in-depth interviews, ensuring participant anonymity. Thematic analysis was employed, utilizing a coded structure and NVivo 12 software for data coding and analysis. The research objectives directed the final analysis (Thorogood & Green, 2018).

#### 4. Results

The findings of this study emphasize the AbaQulusi Local Municipality's involvement in IDP implementation for local economic development. These outcomes are categorized into three themes derived from the study: effective governance, enhancing competitiveness, and fostering enterprise growth and informal economy, all connected to promoting inclusivity, pro-poor development, and public-private partnerships.

##### 4.1 Good Governance

In terms of understanding the link between the implementation of the integrated development plan and the local economic development in Local

Municipalities in South Africa, good governance is regarded as one of the most important elements in attracting investments and the creation of employment opportunities. Effective and efficient planning, formulation, and implementation of the IDP is central to LED. A significant challenge underscored in this study is the requirement for greater alignment between IDP and LED execution within AbaQulusi Local Municipality. Private sector representatives and municipal officials noted that the lack of coordination between these two aspects in planning, formulation, and execution has hindered the municipality from fully realizing the potential advantages of their successful implementation. One private sector representative highlighted:

*"We lack leadership in this sphere. The Local Municipality needed to conduct a rigorous needs assessment of the people's needs and aspirations because these form the foundation of the IDP. Inclusive consultations with residents, businesses, and civil society organizations are crucial to identifying key priorities and challenges, but these were not conducted". PSR05*

These sentiments shared by the private sector representative were echoed by other private sector representatives and community members in the study, with another private sector representative stating that:

*"The lack of coordination and integration between the two (IDP and LED) poses a problem in engineering*

*development in the AbaQulusi Local Municipality. There is a complete disjuncture in formulating and implementing the IDP and LED, yet they should speak to one another. Initially, the IDP should be a vehicle that drives LED, while successful and sustainable LED will drive the successful implementation of the IDP in the future. The successful and sustainable LED will mean that poverty, unemployment, and inequality are reduced and more financial resources in the Municipal fiscus, which will mean that the AbaQulusi will have more money to use for health, education, social development, and creating a vibrant economic hub". (PSR04)*

Differing from the perspective of private sector representatives, a municipal official highlighted the challenges of advocating for economic-focused strategies centered on LED, especially within AbaQulusi Local Municipality, which grapples with significant poverty, unemployment, and inequality issues. The participant stated that:

*"While it is critical to focus on economic-driven policies and strategies anchored around LED, it is difficult because of the high rates of poverty, unemployment, and inequality in the AbaQulusi Local Municipality. The Municipality's priorities are focused on providing basic services and amenities to the most vulnerable and marginalized groups. Also, due to the financial constraints the Municipality faces, it is not ideal to invest that scarce money into LED programs at the expense of roads, water, sanitation, health, and education services and infrastructure. However, this is not to say the Municipality does not promote LED. We have an LED Unit with the AbaQulusi Local Municipality that primarily focuses on improving business (both formal and informal), agriculture, mining, and tourism". (MO2)*

While pro-poor development is essential in an unequal nation like South Africa, it is imperative for these initiatives to generate spin-off effects that stimulate local economies, foster job creation, drive overall growth, and not create a dependency syndrome, and over-reliance on state provision. Furthermore, while the Municipality maintains an LED Unit, the findings suggest its focus is primarily on providing non-financial assistance. This perspective was also echoed by another municipal official:

*"The main purpose of LED is to support economic development initiatives that will empower the community, create job opportunities, and minimize*

*income leakages and growth by building partnerships with relevant stakeholders to create a conducive environment for job creation". (MO3)*

Executing the IDP for LED within AbaQulusi Local Municipality faces challenges stemming from inadequate financial resources and conflicting viewpoints among its diverse stakeholders. The debate between the private sector representatives and the municipal officials is a classic case of a lack of a consultative process that negatively impacts principles of transparency, accountability, and most importantly community ownership. Community members and private sector representatives also emphasized the fact that the IDP implementation in the AbaQulusi Local Municipality was a top-down approach to management, making it difficult to link it with LED, as noted by one private sector representative:

*"Successful formulation and implementation of LED projects requires local government, businesses, and community members to all be involved in the planning phases. These three stakeholders would have to set strategic priorities according to the resources available. This is not what is happening here in AbaQulusi Local Municipality. I have never been consulted on the planning or formulation of the IDP". PSR02*

In line with the above, municipal officials were asked about their views and experiences in the planning, formulation, and implementation of the IDP to promote LED. All municipal officials in the study indicated that while they did not necessarily go door-to-door informing residents of the AbaQulusi Local Municipality about the IDP planning, formulation, and implementation processes, the Local Municipality did this through its elected ward councillors, who were the brokers between communities and the Local Municipality.

However, while this mechanism of information dissemination may be justifiable in the political sense, it is difficult to support in accordance with the local government developmental mandate. The municipal officials have to implement projects that prioritize the needs of the people served by the Local Municipality. The municipal officials therefore are mandated to go to communities and establish the needs of the people they are providing services to.

Due to this disconnection and lack of communication between the community members, businesses

and the municipal officials, the participants indicated lack of good governance in terms of resource allocation for priority community needs. The participants also argued that the lack of monitoring and evaluation by the municipal officials on the projects they were implementing in communities negatively impacted the successes of those economic-driven projects anchored in LED. The community members noted the lack of project progress assessments, identification of bottlenecks, and necessary adaptations should there be any need.

#### 4.2 Promotion of Competitiveness

The second critical aspect of implementing the integrated development plan that promotes local economic development is improving the competitiveness of the AbaQulusi Local Municipality using different approaches. One of the biggest challenges highlighted in literature on the synchronization of the IDP and LED is the lack of adequate manpower with the right skills, knowledge and capacity to implement both IDP and LED (Gunter, 2005).

The improvement of competitiveness of the AbaQulusi Local Municipality requires improving local governance through municipal officials and local authorities 'simply getting the basics right' by undertaking their roles and responsibilities in an efficient, transparent, and accountable manner. Beyond personal credentials of municipal officials, the promotion of competitiveness of the AbaQulusi Local Municipality requires an enabling environment for local investment, often in terms of amending municipal regulations or assisting with licensing or procurement.

Participants were requested to share their perspectives and personal encounters regarding how the execution of the IDP within AbaQulusi Local Municipality has contributed to fostering competitiveness and enhancing LED. Participants mentioned agriculture, tourism, manufacturing sector, services sector, and the mining sector as areas of comparative advantage for the AbaQulusi Local Municipality.

### 5. Agriculture

Regarding the agricultural sector, participants offered diverse feedback on the effects of IDP implementation in the Municipality on their agricultural endeavors. Municipal officials provided an overview of AbaQulusi Local Municipality's agricultural landscape. A specific municipal official highlighted that:

*"In AbaQulusi Local Municipality, agricultural land is the dominant form of land use. The Local Municipality The major agricultural practices are crop production, occurring mainly in the highveld areas and fertile valleys of the major rivers that run through the area, cattle farming, ranching, and game farming. Several commercial farmlands are also subject to land restitution". (MO4)*

The municipal officials were also asked to elaborate on the farming activities in the AbaQulusi Local Municipality. A participant in this category highlighted that:

*"Current crops produced in the AbaQulusi Local Municipality are maize, groundnuts, soya beans, sunflowers, fruits, and sorghum. Cattle farming has played a major role, but this market is also strained due to rising input costs and stock theft. International and national meat exports have also been affected due to mad cow disease and foot-and-mouth disease. Small game farming provides an opportunity for economic development and provides a solution to stock theft, domestic diseases, and the demands made by the national and international market". (MO6)*

In response to inquiries about the significance of the agricultural sector to the economy of AbaQulusi Local Municipality, the majority of private sector representatives emphasized its vital role in fostering growth and economic advancement. One of these representatives specifically emphasized that:

*"The agriculture sector is also regarded as a critical driver of the local Municipality, contributing just over 10% annually to the local economy. It is also a sector providing many jobs to the population ranging from skilled to semi-skilled and unskilled. A major investment and boost to the agricultural sector within AbaQulusi Local Municipality can be credited to the ongoing development of the Agri-processing Industrial Economic Hub. Due to the intense focus on agriculture, the AbaQulusi Agri-Business Forum was also established to unleash the agricultural potential within AbaQulusi Local Municipality, uplifting the emerging farmers, and promoting agricultural activities for emerging farmers". (PSR4)*

Nevertheless, while the aforementioned viewpoints were common among private sector representatives and municipal officials, the perspectives, and

encounters of community members in the study diverged. These individuals conveyed that the benefits of the agricultural sector in AbaQulusi Local Municipality were concentrated among a limited number of predominantly white farmers. A community member residing in an informal settlement expressed that:

*"You see, for us who do not have land, our lives and livelihoods are in the hands of a few white farmers with the land, cattle, and crops we must buy to survive. Agriculture does not benefit people experiencing poverty. We do not even have small pieces of land to grow the vegetables we need to cook for our families. We can never think about cash crop production, especially knowing that we do not have land and water resources like boreholes and irrigation systems". (CM7)*

Community members residing in traditional regions echoed comparable feelings to those in rural and informal settlements regarding their lack of financial gains from the agricultural sector. However, they highlighted that they could still engage in crop cultivation and cattle farming. A member of the community in these traditional areas specifically pointed out that:

*"Agriculture is not the same for us and those commercial farmers. Those farmers have huge land to grow cash crops and do cattle farming. We must conduct small-scale farming to feed our families because our land is small, and our livestock is not much. Only when we have extra that we can sell or when we need money to cover other expenses such as school fees or medical bills, we then sell our crops or livestock". (CM8)*

These findings suggest that not all individuals within AbaQulusi Local Municipality experience direct benefits from agriculture. While certain residents engage as producers, the majority, particularly those residing in rural and informal settlements, function as consumers.

## 6. Tourism

Shifting focus to tourism, participants were queried about their perspectives on IDP implementation within AbaQulusi Local Municipality and its influence on the sector. Many private sector representatives and municipal officials emphasized the significance of tourism for LED within the municipality.

Nonetheless, this sentiment was not echoed by community members, with the majority indicating minimal gains from local tourism. One community member specified that:

*"You see, tourism only benefits those already rich and has businesses that attract tourists who visit the Local Municipality. If you do not have anything to sell or offer to tourists, then there is nothing you benefit from tourism. The Municipality collects money from tourism, but that money is not for us as the citizens of the AbaQulusi Local Municipality. We do not even know how the money is spent". (CM12)*

When queried about their thoughts regarding the community members' opinions on the advantages of tourism for LED, municipal officials highlighted that these community members might possess misconceptions about how tourism contributes to the economy. A specific municipal official remarked that:

*"Tourism in the Municipality benefits the AbaQulusi Local Municipality, the Zululand District Municipality, and the South African economy. The vast tourist attractions in the Municipality have witnessed an influx of tourists from other parts of the country and other countries, and we also have local tourists. This continues to bring revenue into the Municipality coffers". (M07)*

The study findings underscore the necessity for increased advocacy concerning the significance of tourism for AbaQulusi Local Municipality. Moreover, there's a call for greater transparency in explaining how tourism contributes to the broader economy and overall local economic development. This includes illustrating how the financial gains can positively impact marginalized and poor groups within the community.

## 7. Manufacturing Sector

Study participants were requested to share their perspectives and encounters concerning the implementation of the IDP and its effects on the manufacturing sector within AbaQulusi Local Municipality. Both private sector representatives and municipal officials noted that the manufacturing sector's contribution to the local economy was limited. However, both groups expressed some optimism for its potential growth. One municipal official specifically mentioned that:



*"The manufacturing sector has the potential to expand due to the natural resources and land available within the Municipality. The Municipality is currently working with the Department of Economic Development and the Department of Small Business in exploring and growing the Sewing industry and Food processing plants within the area". (MO10)*

These findings elucidate the obstacles confronted by the manufacturing sector within AbaQulusi Local Municipality, while also offering insights into potential avenues for its expansion and advancement.

## 8. Services Sector

Study participants also underscored the significance of the services sector in LED. Nevertheless, private sector representatives and municipal officials pointed out that enhancing the sector's growth is essential since Vryheid town stands as the sole primary service hub within the Local Municipality. A municipal official specified that:

*"Vryheid serves as the primary service center for AbaQulusi Municipality, offering diverse services. These services vary from financial, administration, and government to manufacturing and retail. However, with the large geographical extent of AbaQulusi Local Municipality hindering development, the Municipality has taken strides to increase access to various services. An example to note is the eMondlo Thusong Center which recently opened and functions as a multi-purpose center for the community, offering government, administration, and financial services to the people, preventing long-distance traveling, traveling expenses, and the overcrowding of services in Vryheid Town". (MO4)*

Another municipal official further highlighted that the concentration of services in a central location restricts many individuals from accessing the services that should be accessible to them. The participant remarked that:

*"The widespread population within AbaQulusi Local Municipality is a great concern because people are currently restricted to services that they are supposed to be exposed to daily, and therefore the development of a Capital Investment Framework will assist the Municipality in identifying the gaps and improving service delivery". (MOT)*

The study outcomes underscore the notable difficulties that AbaQulusi Local Municipality encounters in extending services beyond Vryheid. Nonetheless, the Municipality has also acknowledged its efforts to address the gaps in service delivery processes.

## 9. Mining Sector

Participants were also queried regarding the implementation of the IDP and its repercussions on mining within AbaQulusi Local Municipality. Private sector representatives, municipal officials, community members, and leadership (both Traditional and Community) detailed the adverse impact of coal mine closures on the municipality's economy, causing a rise in unemployment, poverty, and inequality. Providing a comprehensive perspective on coal mining in AbaQulusi Local Municipality, a councilor highlighted that:

*"Coal mining historically provided a major force in the local economy of Northern KwaZulu-Natal. However, over the past 15 years, several mines in the area ceased operation, negatively impacting the regional economy. The AbaQulusi Local Municipality was particularly affected by the closure of the Coronation and Hlobane mines in 1997 and 1998, respectively. This proved to be a turning point in the economy of the AbaQulusi Local Municipality, as many people were left unemployed. The area also experienced a 'brain drain', where many professional, skilled, and semi-skilled workers migrated elsewhere to seek employment opportunities". (WC5)*

One community member in the study elaborated on the effects of the mine closures. The community member highlighted that:

*"The effects of the closure of the mines can still be felt and seen today, with the high unemployment rates, poverty, and the additional pressure on the Local Municipality to provide services. Many hostels (former mining housing) and developments within these areas have been left to deteriorate". (CM19)*

When questioned about their reaction to the issues arising from the shutdown of coal mines in AbaQulusi Local Municipality, municipal officials acknowledged that the Local Municipality was actively conducting a situational analysis to revive the former mining settlements. A specific municipal official remarked that:

*"We understand the challenges being faced due to the mine closures, particularly regarding human settlements. The AbaQulusi Local Economic Development unit is undertaking a study to revitalize former mining towns/settlements. It must also be noted that not all mines within the region have shut down, as a few are operating on a microscopic scale". (MO3)*

The information gathered from participants in this study demonstrates the adverse consequences of coal mine closures on the broader scope of the Local Municipality. These consequences include the loss of revenue generated through taxes paid by mining companies, along with increased expenditures on providing social security services to those unemployed individuals who lost their jobs in the mines. The findings also illustrate how mine closures pushed community members who were already in poverty into even deeper crises, aggravating inequality within the Local Municipality.

### 9.1 Enterprise Development and the Informal Economy

The third result of enacting the integrated development plan that advances local economic development involves fostering the growth of enterprises, primarily focusing on small, micro, and medium enterprises (SMMEs). Given that a considerable number of SMMEs within AbaQulusi Local Municipality operated informally and lacked registration, many community members contended that instead of receiving support from the municipality for their informal businesses, they faced harassment and violations of their trading rights. A community member expressed that:

*"The Municipality does not care about us or our livelihoods. We do not have employment, so we look for money to start our small businesses to sell fruits and vegetables. However, the Municipality comes and then confiscates these products from us. How are we supposed to earn a living? Instead of assisting us with providing proper vending places, we are harassed, made to pay fines, and our stock is taken away from us. What do the municipal officials think we will survive on? We cannot get money to buy food, send children to school, or buy clothes if we do not sell these fruits and vegetables". (CM19)*

Municipal officials were prompted to address the opinions and encounters of community members

regarding the development and expansion of SMMEs within AbaQulusi Local Municipality. The majority concurred that the Municipality's responsibility lay in facilitating and empowering SMME growth in the communities. Nonetheless, they pointed out that certain informal traders were conducting sales in restricted zones, and others lacked the necessary trading licenses. A specific municipal official remarked that:

*"The role of the AbaQulusi Local Municipality in promoting LED for SMMEs is to capacitate and empower the informal traders to play a role in local economic growth. We facilitate meetings with informal traders to assist them in establishing structures like the Informal Economy Chamber. This Chamber coordinates the tariffs imposed on the informal traders for trading licenses and rental fees to assist the Municipality in paying for the upgrade of the vending facilities and the sustainability of the operations of the facilities. The AbaQulusi Local Municipality also currently supports the development of SMMEs within its area as it provides on-site training, workshops, seminars, and registrations of businesses. As we speak, the Municipality plans to build more market stalls for the informal traders to promote and improve the economy while improving their livelihoods and those in their communities. However, illegal vending in prohibited areas without an operating trading license is not permitted by law and is punishable by a fine". (MO6)*

The findings highlight the necessity for informal traders and AbaQulusi Local Municipality to collaboratively formulate strategies that encourage the creation and advancement of SMMEs in manners that mutually benefit both the traders and the Municipality. Regardless of the legal debates that surround the informal economy in South Africa, the informal traders play significant roles in the socio-economic fabric of South Africa. Informal traders, commonly operating in street markets, townships, and public spaces, constitute a substantial portion of the South African economy. They provide accessible goods and services to communities, offer employment opportunities, and contribute to the local economic base. Integrating informal traders into LED initiatives, including assistance with registration and other legal obligations, and access to finance and infrastructure can have a transformative impact on local economies, fostering inclusivity and sustainable growth.

## 10. Discussion

The economic challenges faced by the AbaQulusi Local Municipality are extensively documented. The Local Municipality is under the administration of the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government. The findings from this study indicate that in the past few years the Local Municipality has witnessed sluggish productivity growth, with signs of further deceleration, the unemployment rate has recently been increasing from already high levels, while inequality remains at a troubling level. This data is supported by the recent assessments of the AbaQulusi Local Municipality's 2023/2024 IDP and Budget Process Plan that indicate potential growth underscore a pattern of low and waning growth rates (AbaQulusi Local Municipality, 2023).

The study results show that the existing state of the AbaQulusi Local Municipality economy is not sustainable. The data shows that persistent poor socioeconomic development exacerbates unemployment, poverty, and inequality, while the pronounced earning disparity fosters social disintegration and jeopardizes local economic progress. This high inequality gives rise to conflicting perspectives, making it difficult to reach compromises among the upper, middle, and the lower classes. This impasse leads to policy and strategy uncertainties, contributing to local economic frailty. The resolution of these financial challenges necessitates an instant concentration on policies and strategies that can bolster the AbaQulusi Local Municipality's potential for growth. However, these should be coupled with measures that reshape the distribution of development benefits and primarily reshape the proprietorship and control structures that oversee the local economy.

Efforts aimed at restructuring the AbaQulusi local economy need to adhere to the principles of sustainability and intergenerational equity. This implies that economic reform should be carried out in a way that doesn't jeopardize the enduring competitive advantage of the local economy within regional, provincial, and national labour and product markets. This highlights the significance of concurrently prioritizing local economic transformation, inclusive growth, and competitiveness, as it offers a coherent strategy for tackling the issues of unemployment, poverty, and inequality.

In the case of the AbaQulusi Local Municipality, local economic transformation signifies a swift

and profound alteration in the mechanisms and arrangements of economic rights and domination. The central goal of this transformation is to establish opportunities for all residents of the AbaQulusi Local Municipality to lead productive, prosperous, and dignified lives. Several factors impede the greater participation of new businesses in the local economy, including scale economies, regulations favoring incumbents, ineffective policies assisting competitors, and competition laws biased towards larger firms. Additionally, historically entrenched spatial planning disadvantages previously disadvantaged individuals in terms of travel costs and job searches, hindering equitable participation in the economy. These factors, among others, obstruct meaningful local economic transformation in the AbaQulusi Local Municipality.

In terms of reducing inequality in the AbaQulusi Local Municipality, it is recommended that the Municipality applies inclusive growth when expanding its local economy. This will ensure that the benefits of growth are broadly shared. In other words, economic growth must be accompanied by a reduction in inequality. However, the starting point should be an economy that grows. A decline in investor confidence, compounded by political and policy uncertainties, institutional weaknesses, and unresolved regulatory disputes, has led to a low-growth environment in the AbaQulusi Local Municipality. This limited growth jeopardizes the local economy's transformative potential, as it endangers vital social expenditures by the local government and the general progressiveness of taxation and expenditure policies. Moreover, limited growth obstructs the ability to use fiscal and tax policies in a counter-cyclical manner, strategies that could otherwise be employed to strengthen overall demand. In the long run, continual low growth might also jeopardize the local economy's prospects for sustained growth if it inhibits the execution of essential measures that enhance growth, such as productive infrastructure or high-quality education and skills training. A shift to a higher growth trajectory can result from structural transformation or expanding existing sectors with a clear comparative advantage, for example, high-value agriculture, which is labour-intensive.

## 11. Conclusion

Results from this study indicate that local economic development (LED) is a crucial strategy for addressing poverty and inequality in the AbaQulusi Local

Municipality and South Africa in general. To achieve this, the formulation of IDPs and LED strategies should be pro-poor and aligned with redressing South Africa's historical imperatives. The legacy of apartheid has left a significant portion of the population marginalized and poor. Consequently, local governments in South Africa have embraced a pro-poor LED mandate, aiming to uplift disadvantaged communities, provide basic services, and improve their overall quality of life.

However, for sustainable development, it is vital to address the challenge of limited spin-off effects. While pro-poor LED initiatives are vital for addressing social inequalities, their success also hinges on generating spin-off effects that contribute to local economic growth. These spin-offs involve the creation of jobs, increased economic activity, and improved infrastructure, thereby stimulating the broader economy.

Therefore, a more balanced approach that combines pro-poor interventions with market-driven strategies is essential. By encouraging private investment, supporting entrepreneurship, and facilitating economic growth, LED initiatives can not only uplift marginalized communities but also create a broader positive impact on the local economy. South Africa's journey toward a more equitable and prosperous future requires an integrated approach that harnesses the power of both pro-poor and market-driven LED strategies.

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# From Traditionalists to Committed Democrats: Chiefs and Local Democracy in Malawi

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**Abstract:** Traditional authorities are part and parcel of the local governance system in most African countries. This means that these hereditary authorities work side by side with elected leaders within the areas of their jurisdiction. Such a state of affairs has raised questions regarding the compatibility of chiefly authority with the democratic political institutional apparatus governing modern local polities. The study therefore examines the role of traditional authorities in enhancing local democracy. To this end, methodologically the study employed desk research, key informant interviews as the data collection techniques. Contrary to the skeptical view regarding the compatibility of the chiefly authority with local democracy, key findings suggest that despite traditional authorities being trapped in succession wrangles and their potential to impede the visibility of councillors, the final analysis suggests that chiefs are the key catalysts of local democracy through their significant contribution in enhancing local participation, coordinating democratic forces in the rural areas and the entrenchment of free and fair elections.

**Keywords:** Democrats, Traditionalists, Traditional Authorities, Local Democracy

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## 1. Introduction

In most African countries, traditional authorities remain part and parcel of the local government system. Since the colonial times, governments have been trying to devise mechanisms of incorporating chiefs in their governance agenda after recognising indispensability institution in the governance of rural masses where the visibility of the African state apparatus is virtually obscure (Kayira & Banda, 2018). Indeed, countries like South Africa, Lesotho, Nigeria and Ghana have recognised the institution of the chieftaincy in their constitutions (Engerbert, 2003; Sklar, 2003; Logan & Amakoh, 2022). The institution of the chieftaincy has justified its relevance and legitimacy as a key player in local development by contributing substantially in areas of education, health, poverty alleviation, humanitarian services for the underprivileged, safeguarding the plight of the physically challenged and environmental protection by collaborating with various development partners in rural areas where the visibility of the state apparatus is compromised (Boateng & Afranie, 2020). However, notwithstanding such contributions in the development sector since the advent of the third wave of democracy which swept across the African continent and other low-income countries scholars have been interested to understand the relevance of the institution of the chieftaincy

in the democratic dispensation (See Logan, 2020; Ntsebeza, 2020). However, the defenders of the institution of the chieftaincy have responded by advancing the argument that Concerns about chiefs corroding national level democracy are largely misplaced. Instead, chiefs play a vital role in facilitating the stability of democratic institutions in the area of their jurisdiction (Logan, 2008; Baldwin, 2020).

This paper contributes towards this debate by interrogating the extent to which chiefs in Malawi have adapted towards the demands of the democratic institutions in local politics. In Malawi, democratic local governance emerged after the demise of the Banda regime in 1994. However, despite scholars interrogating the role of traditional authorities in Malawi's new political dispensation where the analyses converge on the notion that chiefs remain influential leaders in local matters (Hussein & Sambo, 2021), the literature remains silent on the question regarding the extent to which chiefs are committed towards the entrenchment of local democracy. To this end, the paper is guided by the following objectives: to understanding the extent that chiefs are committed towards democratic pluralism in local democracy? To what extent are chiefs involved in inculcating democratic values such as human rights, political participation, transparency and accountability? To what extent are chiefs involved in conflict

moderation pertaining to electoral politics? The paper is organized into five sections. The first section traces the history of chiefs in local governance. The second is devoted to the literature review where the theoretical and empirical underpinnings of the study are articulated. This is followed by a section on methodological approach. The fourth section presents a discussion of the findings of the study based on the specific research objectives. The last section is devoted to the conclusion and recommendations.

## 2. Literature Review: Conceptual and Theoretical Underpinnings

### 2.1 Local Democracy

Beetham argues that democracy as a polity is characterized by the existence of a decision-making process that is subject to the control by all members of the collective considered as equals (Beetham, 1994). In such a context, free and fair elections are a basic instrument for promoting popular control. Democracy also entails the existence of independent associations and increased equality among citizens. Effective local democracy is the foundation of an effective national solid democracy. Local democracy according to its proponents allows citizens to develop effective awareness of their political system and internalized democratic principles thereby significantly contributing towards the stability of the democratic regime. While there is a consensus among many scholars regarding the desirability of local democracy, scholars have different conceptions regarding what local democracy is all about. A key goal of local democracy is to bring together local institutions and different actors and interests to accomplish community determined objectives. The key characteristics of local democracy in this case include: community centeredness, the existence of a culture of deliberation, the existence of healthy political competition; the existence of multiple political players such as political parties and civil society groups, popular participation or active involvement of citizens in development processes and political education (Bula, 2012).

### 2.2 Chiefs and Democracy

The Concept of Chief is defined as a person "elected or selected in accordance with the customary usage and recognised by the government to wield authority and perform functions derived from tradition or assigned by central government within specified

areas" (Arhin, 1985). The institution of the chieftaincy coexists with modern governance structures where chiefs in these systems hold positions in accordance with customary laws and their functions regulated by law (Baldwin, 2020). They also derive their legitimacy and mandate from traditions and customs while legitimacy of officials of modern governmental structures is derived from constitutional provisions. This state of affairs has led scholars to question the compatibility of these hereditary with the democratic institutional set-ups which characterize modern local government political systems. This debate has led to the emergence of two competing schools of thought. On the one hand, scholars holding the pessimistic view predicted that the existence of chiefs amidst democratic institutions at the local level was inimical towards the attainment of authentic and vibrant democracy. According to this perspective, the fact that in democratic local polity chiefs are no longer formally recognised as the true representatives of the people removes every incentive on their party to support political pluralism by cooperating with elected leaders at the local level (Oomen, 2000:14). However, defenders of the chieftaincy contend that chiefs are capable of developing an effective alliance with elected leaders in strengthening democracy thereby becoming key catalysts of democratic pluralism and tolerance (Murray, 2004; West & Kloeck-Jenson, 1999). Indeed, various analyses across Africa suggest that Africans who live under these dual systems of authority do not draw a sharp distinction between hereditary chiefs and elected local government officials as most analysts would expect. Instead, these local leaders are seen by the public as two sides of the same coin especially in rural areas which host the largest proportion of Africa's population (Oomen, 2000; Owusu, 1996).

Critics informed by institutional analysis have also cast doubt regarding the ability of chiefs to provide effective leadership in the democratic dispensation. Their fears are based on the fact that the hereditary nature of the chieftaincy means that they cannot be deposed from leadership position through political competition or constitutional means in the event that their conduct deviates from the interest of the people in line with the democratic creed thereby undermining the people-centered spirit that anchor the democratic polity (Molutsi, 2004). However, the supporters of the chieftaincy dismiss the reasoning that chiefs are chosen through closed mechanisms. Instead in normal circumstances chiefs are chosen

in a way that is compatible with the requirements of the democratic creed where an electoral college composed of representatives from various families in the community are involved in the process of selecting candidates in line with the spirit of openness (Ayittey, 1991).

Skeptics have also doubted the ability of the chiefs to become catalysts of popular participation given that the institution of the chieftaincy is trapped in most parts of Africa is trapped in gerontocracy and male dominance thereby alienating youths and women from participating in decision making processes (Molutsi, 2004). Contrary to this concern, the proponents of the chieftaincy have posited that unlike elected leaders and other development actors in local governance, chiefs are familiar and accessible to rural populations to the extent that in most parts of Africa chieftaincy offers rural people the opportunity for everyday participation (Logan, 2003).

Another aspect of the chieftaincy that has led critics to raise the red flag relates to the ability of chiefs to emerge as defenders of human rights in the areas of their jurisdiction. Such a concern stems from the fact that chiefs are the custodians of cultural traditions which places much emphasis on the community at the expense of the sanctity of the individual. However, the supporters of the institutional of chieftaincy posit that the norm of excluding women and youth from participation has been changing rapidly in the post-independence era (Beall, Mkhize & Vawda, 2005). In most countries chiefs work with other players in the governance sector to advocate for the rights of marginalized groups such as women and the youth.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

The study employed the lens of the theory of institutionalism particularly the theories of institutional change. By definition, institutions are humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction thereby reducing uncertainty by providing a structure to everyday life (North, 1990). Other perspectives view institutions as stable and shared systems of belief about the expected behaviour of the members of the society in various aspects of life. In this case institutions give a common understanding or knowledge among the members regarding a particular equilibrium path of the game (Williamson, 2000; Mario, 2018). The utility of the institutional theory in the analysis of the behaviour of actors in

local settings lie in the fact that local governments are rooted within the complex nature of formal and informal rules of the game operating within the local structures and shaped by the distribution of power within which they are embedded (Judge, Stocker & Wolman, 1997). In this case, institutions act as instruments through which the values of the society are carried out and entrenched among the player of the political game at the local level (Judge, Stocker & Wolman, 1997). In this case, the gist of the institutional theory is that the new institutional that emerge as a result of the process of institutional change impose new political values on the social and political actors whose modes of behaviour were previously anchored by the old political institutional framework (Levi, 1990).

### **4. Methodological Approach**

The study employed the qualitative methodological approach. The approach was adopted due to its ability to allow respondents to effectively narrate their experiences, stories and emotions thereby giving the researcher in-depth insights regarding the phenomena under interrogation (Cresswell, 2013). In this case, the qualitative approach enabled the researchers to get an in-depth understanding on how chiefs are coping with democratic institutions at the local level from the perspectives of different players of this level of governance. The study also utilised a case study design so as to have an in-depth understanding of the phenomena under interrogation (Yin, 2009; Eisenhardt, 1998). Key informant interviews targeted Chiefs, councillors, MPs and NGOs which were purposively selected. In terms of desk research, the researchers utilised insights from various documents which tackle issues of governance such as reports from previous studies, newspapers and books.

### **5. Results and Discussion**

#### **5.1 Chiefs and Political Pluralism in Local Governance**

The first objective of the study was to assess the extent to which chiefs complement the efforts of elected leaders in the areas of in the current local political institutional (democratic) framework. Theoretically, owing to their different sources of legitimacy, we anticipate the existence of an antagonistic relationship between these two local leaders. Chiefs derive their legitimacy and mandate from traditions and customs while legitimacy of officials of

modern governmental structures is purely derived from constitutional provisions (Boateng & Afranie, 2020). According to critics, such a scenario is likely to ignite direct competition in a 'winner takes all' battle for the loyalty of the local communities (Oomen, 2000; Nijenhuis, 2003). The respondents put it: "unlike the case during the Banda regime where chiefs were subservient to the authority of the one-party system, under the current democratic dispensation, chiefs are recognising politicians such as councillors and MPs as equal partners in development" (Interview with project Manager for UNECO Zomba). This was collaborated by almost all the councillors who described their working relationship with the chiefs as being very cordial. In this regard, the dominant narrative was that chiefs make it easy for councillors to mobilise local people for development projects. The same was also true for all MPs that were interviewed. They conceded that their efforts to develop their constituencies were significantly complemented by the chiefs.

## 5.2 Chiefs and the Human Rights Civic Education Agenda

The Second objective of the study was to gauge the extent to which chiefs contribute towards the inculcation of democratic values in the areas of their jurisdiction. The dominant response was that chiefs have emerged to be the key catalysts for governance projects initiatives focusing enlightening the rural masses on issues of rights and responsibilities. According to this perspective, "the demise of the one-party regime in 1994 created space for the proliferation of non-state actors in the governance sector at the local level. These NGOs use chiefs as facilitators of such governance projects" (Interview with programme Manager of UNECO). In this case, unlike was the case during the one-party regime, the establishment of the democratic political institutional apparatus in local politics have raise the incentive for chiefs to actively participate in governance projects. According to some of the respondents unlike was the case during the MCP dominated local governance system, in the current set-up, beyond monetary incentives, chiefs are benefiting a lot from their collaboration with the NGOs in the governance sector.

## 5.3 Chiefs and Conflict Moderation in Local Politics

The last objective sought to interrogate the role of traditional authorities in local electoral politics.

The entrenchment local democratic institutions in Malawi with high emphasis on electoral competition means that local governments are now highly politically charged electoral market places. This is especially the case during the campaign periods where aspirants and candidates from different party labels compete for votes in the local, parliamentary and presidential elections (in the case of tripartite elections). During this period, local people are bombarded by campaign messages emanating from both incumbents and challengers of political camps. Such a scenario means that local electoral politics is not immune from instances of electoral violence since contestants may be compelled to use illiberal strategies in their quest to outdo their political rivals (Hussein & Sambo, 2017). Critics are skeptic about the ability of chiefs to effectively contribute towards the attainment of healthy and fair political competition in local politics (Kadt & Larreguy, 2018; Baldwin, 2020; Logan, 2023). According to this perspective, chiefs' neutrality in local electoral politics could not be guaranteed because they might be incentivized to behave like agents of incumbent parties at the expense of the opposition thereby distorting the electoral market place and ruining of democratic choice (Ntsebeza, 2005; Ribot, 2002; Svolic, 2014).

In the Malawian context, such fears may be understandable considering the fact that chiefs are expected to operate under a maxim of serving the government of the day (Kayuni et al., 2019). The role of chiefs in controlling the behaviour of politicians is particularly significant in the Malawian context where candidates in local elections (both local and parliamentary elections) operate within a candidate-centered electoral system. In this system unlike is the case is the party-centered electoral systems political parties do not have absolute control over the behaviour of their candidates since they use their own efforts and resources to sail through the campaign period. In such a scenario, chiefs are the only actors with the moral capital to effectively instill discipline among politicians involved in the electoral contest. Almost all politicians (councillors and MPs) interviewed were contented that chiefs exercise fairness and neutrality when allocating and approving venues for political contestants a scenario which ensures that no party or candidate monopolises such spaces at the expense of other politicians. Hence, contrary to the skeptics, the dominant narrative emanating from key local players involved in this study suggests that chiefs are the catalysts of the existence of free and fair elections in local governance.



## **6. The Darker Side of the Chiefs in the Local Democratic Strengthening Agenda**

### **6.1 The Problem of Political Manipulation**

One of the key challenges from the respondents confronting the chiefs in their quest to emerge as the key incubators of democratic governance in local politics is the perception that chiefs are the agents of the ruling parties (in-depth interview with TA Nkula of Machinga District). According to the respondents, such perceptions are reinforced by the fact that the Chiefs Act of 1967, gives provides that chiefs should serve the government of the day (Hussein & Sambo, 2021). Hence, this creates the perception that chiefs are ill prepared to serve local people who are affiliated to opposition parties thereby ruining the trust towards the institutional of chieftaincy in matters of local governance.

### **6.2 The Problem of Chieftaincy Wrangles**

Another challenge that was highlighted by the respondents regarding the role of chiefs in enhancing democracy was the problem of chieftaincy wrangles. According to this perspective, the proliferation of actors in the local development sector since the advent of multiparty democracy and democratic decentralization has raised the stakes in the chieftaincy. In particular the of chiefs in various development and governance project has raised the profile of the chieftaincy to the extent that even the donor community look at the chiefs as valuable and trusted partner in development and governance (Eggen, 2011). One of the councillors summed up this scenario as follows: "it is tricky to carry out development projects. When you invite people for an area development committee meeting, committee members in other villages never show up because of the divisions in the allegiance" (Nkhoma, 2017:2). Hence, these chieftaincy wrangles have the potential to ruin local democratic participation since chiefs are the key opinion setters especially in the local politics of rural areas where the largest proportion of Malawians live.

### **6.3 Ruining the Visibility of Elected Leaders at the Local Level**

Another challenge that emerged is that the existence of chiefs in local democracy provides confusing signals among the local people. In this regard, the fact that traditional political structures coexist with

modern governance structures and elected leadership in local politics is a double-edged sword (Boateng & Afranie, 2020). While this coexistence may be desirable on many levels as championed by the supporters of the chieftaincy, the presence of the chiefs in local governance brings with it confusing signals on the part of local people especially when it comes to the issues of credit claiming. According to this perspective, the existence of the chiefs makes it difficult for local people to appreciate the relevance of elected leaders (councillors) to the extent that the majority of local people are still trapped in the misconception of looking at councillors as being mere political servants under the supervision of the chiefs. According to the respondents, this makes the task of entrenching true democratic leadership (elected leadership) in local politics to be a difficult task. This is how one of the respondents put it: "the fact that chiefs are the first to speak at the launch of every development project initiated by councillors, means that chiefs are praised a lot as the main initiators and custodians of development at the expense of the councillors".

In this regard, the existence of multiple structures at the local level makes it difficult for the local people or the principals accurately attribute blame in an event where there is poor governance and abuse of resources. This is especially true for the Malawian scenario where both councillors and chiefs claim to be the true representatives of the people.

## **7. Conclusion and Recommendations**

The main objective of the paper was to interrogate the role of chiefs in facilitating the entrenchment of local democracy. The key findings suggest that contrary to the skeptical view despite their hereditary nature, chiefs have emerged to be committed democrats in local politics through the key roles they play in harnessing political pluralism by creating effective collaboration with elected leaders, political education, providing political education and conflict moderation in local electoral politics. However, the perception of bias among some local people due to the strong attachment between chiefs and the government of the day, chieftaincy wrangles and the potential to ruin the visibility of elected leaders in governance and development are some of the challenges confronting the chieftaincy in its quest to attain full democratic transformation.

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# Teacher Perceptions on Advancing Language Proficiency: A Case on Technological Gadgets' Efficacy

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**Abstract:** Online learning has since overruled the so-called traditional teaching-learning approaches. It is for this reason that this paper seeks to investigate technological gadgets' effectiveness in advancing learner language proficiencies. Language as a fundamental aspect of communication cuts across all subjects underpinning the school's prescribed curriculum. Therefore, it is worth ensuring the functional use of online resources towards enhanced language proficiencies. Although literature has been published on emergent online teaching approaches, little has been noted about safeguarding language learning with its diverse components like speaking, reading, writing, grammar, vocabulary, and fluency. Qualitative approach entrenched in a case study design was used, having characteristics of obtaining underlying human experiences, with the ultimate objective to uncover trends yet providing perceptions into the setting of the investigated problem. Three purposefully nominated English language university teachers became participants because of the envisaged experiences of being abruptly faced with challenges to redesign teaching strategies from traditional to the new normal online teaching and learning. It was divulged that (i) unlocked speaking proficiency aptitudes and (ii) enhanced text analysis were the major findings benefitted from the functional use of online learning resources. In conclusion, language learning when administered in online learning platforms becomes more effective and beneficial regarding its diverse aspects. Consequently, the study recommends proper maintenance of the already available online learning resources in schools for enhanced academic attainment and online proficiency skills, not only in language learning but across all subjects offered.

**Keywords:** Digital resources, Language proficiency, Online learning, Text-analysis, Academic attainment

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## 1. Introduction

For the currently interconnected yet globalized world, one of the fundamental and essential skills is effective communication in assorted languages (Lee, 2019). To open doors with regard to professional advancement-educational opportunities and diverse cultural experiences, being proficient in language is noted as a leeway to collaboration, networking and intercontinental communication (Ventouris, Panourgia & Hodge, 2021). Be that as it may, in previous decades language learning has been noted with its characteristic of being complex as it requires experiences that are immense, as well as classroom instruction that is dynamic.

Glancing at the current situation, lately, emanating from integration of technological gadgets together with online learning resources has led to advanced avenues with enhanced language proficiency aptitudes (Alqahtani, 2019). It is worth to note that such technological tools with apps and software to aid

language learning in the so-called virtual reality simulations, have underlying advantages that offer learners improved pathways towards developed language skills. Digital technology with its drastic changes and advancements has indeed prompted a paradigm shift in language education (Hwang, Zou & Lin, 2020). On the other end, alarm bells by some authors are raised by the efficacy that is displayed by these tools as means to advance language proficiency aptitudes. However, with such escalating interconnectedness in this digital world, communicating in an effective manner across barriers of language has since taken a stance of being not only a necessity, but a desirable skill (Kundu, Bej & Dey, 2020). For individuals to navigate diverse linguistic landscapes in multi-cultural connections broadens one's intellect and ability in language learning. In the previous years, language learning was previously considered a cornerstone of education, although the current situation has since brought about a very huge technological transformative dimension, not only in the schooling environment, but in all life endeavours holistically.



## 2. Literature Review

Reviewing literature is indeed necessary to embark on as it is tantamount to laying a brick for research propositions. It is at this stage where authors integrate previously published works and sources to the existing body of knowledge (Troyka, Quittman & Hesse, 2016). Concurrently, Gerit, Lukyanenko and Guy (2022) propose that literature helps at demonstrating knowledge of available sources as well as identifying gaps in existing theories, thereby delimiting the scope, and narrowing down of the problem under investigation.

### 2.1 Empirical Literature

#### 2.1.1 *The Traditional Versus the Digital Era of Language Learning*

If one might recall how language acquisition in the then classroom instruction previously regarded as the so-called 'historical and traditional', there were some identified programs that emerged together with language exchange opportunities. As such approaches to teaching and learning languages were considered effective, some limitations could also be identified (Evans-Amalu & Claravall, 2021). These include, but not limited to, being constrained geographically with challenges of relevant resource access. As the digital age emerged to overrule the entire countries of the universe, technological gadgets are now regarded catalysts brought about to reshape the landscape of language learning (Katemba, 2020).

As alluded by Fathi, Alipour and Saeedian (2018), navigating what the current and recent state is, efficient and effective language learning has been overruled by the propagation of gadgets like tablets, computers and smartphones. What is now being considered as the integral component to the modernised language education is virtual reality simulations, online platforms, and language learning apps. Debates about the integration of technological gadgets into language learning has made it essential to critically examine the extent of efficacy towards advancing language proficiency (Laborda, Díaz & Ramírez, 2020). For the reasons stated above, it therefore became imperative for this paper to delve into examining the intersection of technological gadgets with language proficiency, experiences, and outcomes.

Subsequently, transformed language education during this digital era wave has pioneered technological gadgets to play critical role of transfigured ways

onto how languages are learned and taught (Bakar, Maat & Rosli, 2020). With vary in learning styles and proficiency levels, they now have full exposure of unique access to a wide range of online platforms, these being regarded as beneficial to aspects of flexible learning that cater for personalized learning experiences, thereby leading to enhanced language acquisition.

#### 2.1.2 *Emergent Teaching and Learning Strategies Towards Improved Communication*

As ways to advance language proficiency towards learner academic attainment and excellence in communication, infusion of technological gadgets in the teaching and learning sphere has led to the provision of advanced tools and resources (Esfijani & Zamani, 2020). With the provision of access to diverse online learning instruction, technological gadgets are considered vital. Such teacher-learner engagements have an underlying characteristic that caters for real-time communication with instructors, thereby enabling to unlock and improve the critical features of language learning: listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. In line with unlocking some critical and fundamental language aspects, Nazari and Xodabande (2021) contend that language translation apps are being recognised as essential tools for improved communication cutting across all barriers in language learning. Also, Khlaif (2018) in a conducted study confirms that learners who have received momentous exposure to translation apps are considered to have attained skills to quick understanding of unfamiliar words. This calls to say there is promotion of language competence as learners explore texts, this protruding to expanded linguistic knowledge.

Accordingly, as online language exchange platforms offer opportunities that allow learners to connect with their counter parts for language exchange, engaging in this real-life communication indeed enhances language proficiency levels (Cárdenas-Moncada, Véliz-Campos & Véliz, 2020). Such an authentic context of real-life interaction is vital as it is an open platform that benefits learner practice on speaking and listening skills. Listening to diverse speakers helps on improved comprehension, pronunciation, and language skills holistically. Through receiving prompt feedback supplied by these language learning apps like gamification, Memrise and Duolingo, pronunciation is also refined because learning an unfamiliar and foreign language which is non-mother tongue may

be a non-appealing experience for most learners (Bećirović, BrdarevićČeljo & Delić, 2021). This, therefore, is a wake-up call for language teachers to offer consistent pronunciation practices to enhance learner confidence towards becoming efficient speakers with improved conversation aptitudes.

### 2.1.3 Comprehending With Text

For creation of vibrant language learning environments, the required language skills can be attained through Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) technologies (Chen, Wang, Zou, Lin, Xie & Tsai, 2019). Amongst the skills obtained to enhance language aptitudes in classroom contexts during teaching and learning is text comprehension. As learners emanate from diverse cultural backgrounds with varying linguistic constituencies, there is exposure to accents and dialects that are diverse (Mahmud, 2020). For learners comprehending with texts, they get exposure to communication styles when translations and code switching are explored, this often-helping learners to have a better grasp of the distinctions of language aspects. For well-rounded language proficiency together with progressive skills development, learner engagement leads to exposure on authentic language usage, thereby improving the overall text comprehension in the target language.

Additionally, messaging apps as one of the necessary communication tools allow learners to practice speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills in authentic language learning such that they overcome a wide range of language barriers in an effective manner. Through collaboration of this kind, for a facilitated supportive learning environment, learners as well share language learning resources (Sansanwal, 2020). With exchange of feedback from peers, language skills are refined, and these insights improve text comprehension. Lawrence and Tar (2018) confirm that technological platforms that cater for online language communities from different parts of the world encourage proficient language learning through interaction and collaboration. It is therefore noted that online language communities are intended to augment learner collaboration. As learners engage, they connect with global speakers focusing on the targeted language, leading to creation of virtual friendships and collaborative learning experiences (Maphosa, Dube & Jita, 2021).

As language proficiency development is aided by technological gadgets, concerning inclusivity and accessibility, learning needs to cater for diversity

are also accommodated. Nkengbeza, Mbuza and Chaiinda (2022) note that these gadgets have been proven of their functionality to afford text-to-speech visually challenged learners. With such inclusivity being taken care of, it goes to say that varying abilities and learning styles are considered, thereby making language learning equitable for all. In addition to this, Sharifi, Soleimani and Jafarigohar (2017) articulate that online learning gadgets, as they provide immediate feedback on pronunciation, vocabulary application, grammar usage and language structures, language learning is accelerated and as well equated to academic excellence because a learner who performs well in languages is perceived to perform well across the entire subjects underpinning the curriculum as all subjects contain texts that need to be comprehended.

Be that as it may, Caner and Aydin (2021) dispute that online learning resources help to improve language learning. These authors argue that although online resources may have some benefits, there are as well some fundamental challenges like limited personal interaction where there is lack of face-to-face interaction that previously prevailed in the traditional classrooms. The greatest concern being that feedback exchange done between teachers and learners is regarded vital for language acquisition. Lawrence and Tar (2018) concur that text-based and self-paced online learning resources do not cater for adequate opportunities of practicing speaking and oral communication skills, yet these are regarded, amongst many, essential components towards a well-rounded language proficient learning.

## 2.2 Theoretical Literature

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) by Bandura (1986), with its elements of being a psychological theory, emphasizes that roles like modelling, observational learning, and imitation, are regarded as crucial aspects to redefine behaviour and personal development. It is posited by this theory that as people learn through observing others from their immediate environment, such observations tend to have some influence on how individuals think, perceive aspects as well as influence of own emotions and behaviours. Therefore, importance of cognitive processes like motivation, attention and memory are highlighted by learning behaviours through SCT.

Educationally, this implies that it is necessary to incorporate principles like modelling, imitation,

observational learning, self-efficacy, reinforcement, and consideration of the social context can lead to motivated learners with fostered development in relation to learner cognitive and behavioural skills. All the above-mentioned principles when integrated into educational practices, a learning environment aligned with SCT fundamental concepts can therefore aid in fostering cognitive development among learners. With relevant teaching and learning resources implemented, there would be a facilitated understanding for diverse learning styles (Rachels & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2018).

Furthermore, learners can get exposure to acquiring new language learning skills through SCT. As they observe, information is retained with the intention of replicating the learned behaviour. In relation to language learning, one could look at phrases that are repeated, imitating how words are pronounced, as well as the use of new vocabulary in discussions and dialogues (Li, Garza, Keicher & Popov, 2019). This could be extended to imitating language teachers, or any other users regarded as language proficient. As this exercise gets rooted in the schooling environment, language learning might focus on specific and crucial language aspects of pronunciation, grammatical structures, and vocabulary usage. In the same notion, as learners observe each other during peer collaborations this leads to formation of study groups and language exchange programs (Wilson, Woolfson & Durkin, 2020). With practical implementation of SCT, teaching and learning of languages as a process leads to creation of a more interesting and operative language learning experience.

### **3. Methodology**

Galletta (2013) opines that methodology in research encompasses details, methods and techniques used by researchers to approach the investigated area of interest. These methods and their philosophical assumptions are often associated with the primary background assumptions. Additionally, research methodology involves distinctive procedures used to identify, process, and analyse information considering the topic under investigation. This is the section that permits readers to critically evaluate the overall validity and reliability of any study. When engaging in research it is therefore a vital notion for researchers to clearly understand research methodology logistics as this helps when selecting techniques and tools relevant for the study conducted.

### **3.1 Approach**

This study adopted a qualitative research approach with the aim to explore some multifaceted experiences, challenges and perceptions aligned with enhancing language proficiency as measured against practical application of technological gadgets (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This study deemed this approach a relevant one with its benefit to give access towards examining cultural and social phenomena of the investigated problem, this leading to examining the studied subjects and their perceptions onto how they see technological gadgets' efficacy towards developing language proficiency.

### **3.2 Research Design**

For this qualitative study, a case study design was used. A case study design in a qualitative inquiry is a detailed exploration where an analysis of a specific identified phenomenon is interrogated in its real-life context (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). During this examination process, a comprehensive investigation for a particular case is administered, whether involving a single individual, a group, or an organization within a community. Through the application of a case study, unique features and complexities of the studied case are revealed. As highlighted by Cresswell (2015), this study perceived this case study design as valuable and effective to generate some in-depth understanding of complex issues in real-life contexts. This type of design therefore aimed to examine whether there were any significant effect of technology gadgets towards enhancing language proficiency among learners who received instruction in an unfamiliar of foreign English First Additional language as English medium instruction incorporates most subjects underpinning the prescribed curriculum.

### **3.3 Sampling**

Mckenney and Reeves (2018) propose that sampling seeks to identify subjects within specified population percentages. For this inquiry, a sample of three English language university teachers was purposely nominated. On nomination, their envisaged experiences were closely considered. As pioneers to traditional teaching approaches, abrupt infusion of technological gadgets resulted to redesigning teaching and learning strategies that would be accommodative of transition from tradition to the new normal online engagements. Once more, this was a relevant cohort of participants as they are currently affected with

transition of online instructional approaches in language learning. As well, diversity in proficiency levels and gadget preferences was considered as means to capture ranging teacher perspectives.

### 3.4 Research Instruments

Semi structured interviews administered to the identified cohort of participants who offered English language in varying university levels helped to gather teacher insights with regard to the technological gadget-impact on language learning. With open-ended types of items contained in the interview schedule, interviewers and interviewees were opportune to explore challenges and experiences of the investigated problem (Flick, 2014). During these engagements, there was sharing of perspectives in line with technology integration in language education. Hence these interviews were conducted on teachers with vast experience in language teaching, insight was provided into pedagogical considerations likely to lead to best practices aimed at enhancing language instruction. Upon outlining ethical considerations to participants, with emphasis that their identities and responses would be confidentially stored thus ensuring anonymity, they freely provided informed consent even before they took part in the study (Kumar, 2016).

### 3.5 Data Analysis

As this study employed qualitative research methods, the main aim was to capture narratives by English language teachers in relation to infused online learning versus language development. As analysing data is considered a fundamental aspect in research; and upon attaining rich and context-specific insights, responses from participants were transcribed, then later categorized in accordance with their similarities. When undertaking this thematic analysis, identification of persistent themes related to technological gadget-impact on language proficiency was considered as formation of codes and categories. This pattern identification led to formation of themes discussed in the next section as findings of the study (Cresswell, 2015).

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Unlocked Speaking Proficiency Aptitudes

Analysed data revealed that infusing online learning gadgets in language learning has proved to be

effective as learner speaking proficiency aptitudes were unlocked when measured against traditional teaching and learning strategies. Findings denote that a huge role is played by technological learning gadgets to unlock speaking proficiencies as innovative resources are specifically targeted to enhance speaking skills (Liu, Tai & Liu, 2018).

With regard to interactive speaking exercises, S1 argued:

*Most apps and platforms for language learning incorporate interactive speaking exercises. This is the space that allows opportunities for learners to have practice for spoken sentences, phrases and even dialogues. Speaking skills get to be refined as learners' speech recognition apps give access to feedback embedded within the available pronunciation activities.*

The second participant, S2 has similar sentiments:

*In this digital error, when learners get exposed to controlled environments with platforms allowing them to consistently practice speaking, their confidence and fluency is then gradually established.*

S3 further goes to say:

*Other language learning apps contain gadgets that embed in them speech recognition. To me this is an essential space as pronunciation errors are provided in a very detailed and specific feedback, thereby serving as a guide towards accuracy in speech logistics.*

With the above verbatim quotations, it becomes evident that emergent teaching and learning language strategies that permit infusing online learning gadgets are proved to unlock speaking proficiency aptitudes. As pronunciation is regarded to be one of the critical aspects of speaking proficiency, online learning gadgets help at providing pronunciation activities meant to guide learners to construct accurate sounds and intonation patterns. These language learning tools are necessary as they capacitate learners with effective pronunciation of individual sounds, words and sentences, concurrently improving accent and ways to articulate language conventions (Lotherington, Thumlert, Boreland & Tomin, 2021).

Another identified beauty on the use of online learning technologies is that availability of online



language exchange platforms. These platforms are advantageous with their ability to connect learners with other users across the entire universe. Through video calling there is language exchange and authenticity of such vibrant interactions disclose diverse accents with dynamic conversational styles. In addition to this, Xodabande and Atai (2020) intensely articulate that language learning games have a desirable outcome that helps to motivate learners to speak aloud, attaining fluency, and at same time the learning process seems enjoyable when administered in that fashion. As these language games promote speaking proficiency skills in learners, this encourages spontaneous speaking abilities.

#### 4.2 Enhanced Text Analysis

It emerged as one of the major findings that online learning resources indeed are valuable to enhance text analysis skills. When text analysis is conducted, critically examining written material for meaning to be extracted, as well as identification of patterns, become a prerequisite for language development.

In line with accessing diverse texts, S2 highlights own perception on online engagements when conducting teaching and learning language interventions with learners:

*A provision of access to a wide range of texts including literature and essays is attained using online resources. As learners access these texts, I normally note that gradually, they have improved in ways on how they used to analyse texts of genres, thereby intensifying understanding of language disparities and underlying styles.*

This claim is supported by S1 who reports:

*As learners interpret and highlight texts in online platforms, active reading is therefore encouraged as learners in my class normally mark substantial passages, this coupled with recording observations identified within the text itself. One another thing that I have been noticing when my learners interrogate these online language apps is that they allow access to the complexity of texts with inclusion of difficulties encountered in vocabulary building and sentence structure, consenting learners to identify texts aligned with own proficiency levels.*

Considering the above arguments, it is worth to note that text analysis is enhanced when technological

gadgets are infused in leaning languages. These findings denote that in conjunction with written content, analysing components that are multimedia in nature enhances comprehension by providing understanding of the entire text to be analysed. As learners get exposure to a wide range of online learning apps, they become experts when analysing texts for differing languages (Lai & Gu, 2011). During this comparison period, texts regarded as original when measured to versions that have been translated also enhances dimensions for developed and redefined linguistic structures (Giudici, Dettori & Caboni, 2020).

Subsequently, when diverse learners collaborate with regard to text analysis projects they engage in discussions by sharing interpretations, as well enrich their own texts as they embark analysis through diverse perspectives. The termed as discussion forums apps are renowned with their provisioning of platforms that help learners engage in text analysis discussions with peers. Also, as interpretations are shared with exchanged feedback, analytical and critical thinking skills are attained.

Findings for this investigation are in line with the Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986). This theory has assumptions that with practical implementation, teaching and learning of languages therefore leads to creation of a more interesting and operational language learning experience. Top of Form Nevertheless, there are critics by some authors as they argue about limited face-to-face interaction in online engagements as compared to traditional classroom environments, articulating by stating that real-time communication and feedback from teachers and peers still remains a crucial stance for language acquisition coupled with understanding ones' cultural traits (Villena & Caballes, 2020).

#### 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper sought to investigate effectiveness of technological gadgets towards advancing learner language proficiencies as learning languages is regarded fundamental for improved communication aptitudes. Findings discovered that online learning apps are vital instruments to help unlock speaking proficiency aptitudes, enhance text analysis, thereby advancing the minimum accepted standards on language development. It is worth highlighting that when online learning resources are incorporated into language education, learners are empowered thus developing strong text analysis skills. As learners

deeply engage with varying texts critical thinking is fostered. To curb the online digital divide, teaching-learning environments could as well implore integrated strategies and approaches. Administering such hybrid approaches benefit language learning in relation to online learning advantages yet act as mitigators of prospective limitations.

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# The Employment Relationship Between Domestic Workers and Their Employers in the Mthatha District, South Africa

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**Abstract:** The relationship between domestic workers and employers has become vital considering the status of the many cases being talked about, such as social security, unemployment, theft, and violence in the domestic worker sector. Most domestic workers also become vulnerable in the sense that they work without an employment contract or any kind of formal agreement stipulating the terms of employment like hours of work, leave days, and more. Hence, the aim of the study is to explore the employment relationship between domestic workers and employers in the Mthatha district, South Africa. A qualitative research approach is used in this study. The following questions are addressed in the study as follows: What experiences exist between domestic workers and their employers; what measures can be put in place to strengthen the employment relationship between domestic workers and employers; setting a model for the development and sustainability of the employment relationship of a domestic worker and employer. Domestic workers experienced abuse in their jobs which also spills over to their families. Some domestic workers quit their jobs as they cannot take the abuse, and some endure the pain just to keep their job more for social security. Employers as argued in various studies treat their domestic workers with respect and value them; however, it is also debated that many challenges to working life in this employment relationship were brought by Covid-19, which further brought economic and emotional burdens. The start of the pandemic has contributed to the challenges of the working relationship between employer and domestic worker in the sense that when one reports for duty the employer would be uncomfortable welcoming the worker due to fear of getting infected. The legislative framework that is not sanctioned properly results in a lack of confidence in domestic workers in engaging with their employers for the betterment of their employment relationship. The study recommends that domestic workers should sign an agreement with their employers that stipulate fair labor practices.

**Keywords:** Employment relationship, Vulnerability, Social security, Legislative framework

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## 1. Introduction

A domestic worker, according to the Republic of South Africa, Department of Labour (2002) is a person who performs work in the home of his/her employer. Such a person mostly includes a gardener, a household employee, and babysitters; just to mention but a few. According to ILO (2023), domestic workers are those workers who perform work in a private household and provide direct or indirect care services to cater to their economic and social needs. The employment relationship is usually the link between employer and employee (male and female, foreign and local) in this case domestic workers and an employer where an employee performs work in return for remuneration. This relationship is seen as a unique one as it develops in an intimate space, and thus the employment relationship needs to be managed effectively so that it bears positive outcomes (Dabala & Sefara, 2020; Anwar & Brukwe, 2023).

The significance of this study is about the perspectives of the employment relationship between domestic workers and their employers. The study will also help deepen communities' perspectives of domestic workers and employers in Mthatha District, South Africa. Theoretically, this study will contribute to the theory that attempts to understand domestic workers' social, economic, and political positions in society since theory concerns with the analysis of other types of power and inequalities, such as the social, economic, and political positions in society, race, and class. Empirically, the study will further advance the frontiers of knowledge and contribute to the existing literature and what it says, e.g. most domestic workers are argued to be not unaware of their labour rights and social protection they can get and that they are eligible for the UIF (Anwar & Brukwe, 2022). In addition, the social grant that domestic workers receive is not enough to take care of their socio-economic



needs. This agrees with the results obtained by Jinnah (2020) that multiple forms of exclusion, including low wages, poor compliance, irregular migration status and discriminatory employment practices contribute to socio-economic issues. In addition, the employment relationship gets affected as domestic challenges will affect their work. Both domestic workers and employers will gain insight in developing cordial working relationships.

This understanding could significantly assist the labour authorities in monitoring and enforcing labour standards in the domestic workplaces. It could provide a basis for the amendment or improvement of the Code of Good Practice, which according to Republic of South Africa Department of Labour (2002) identifies areas of human resources that are key to employment legislation. It further protects the rights of all workers, including domestic worker and domestic worker employer. This study will provide a platform for further investigation regarding the issues phenomenon under discussion. Research of employers' perspectives towards domestic workers in ILO (2015) also argues that there is a knowledge gap in the whole scope of the employment relationship of domestic workers and their employers, in general, and that gap needs to be closed. Therefore, it appears that more research emphasis on the employment relationship of domestic worker and employer would create a substantial impact to the domestic worker sector.

Review of the existing literature on the employment relationship of domestic workers and their employers specifies the research problems as stated below:

- Existing literature shows that there is a knowledge gap in general in the whole scope of the employment relationship of domestic workers and their employers.
- Legislative framework that is not sanctioned properly result in lack of confidence in domestic workers in engaging with their employers for the betterment of their employment relationship.
- Theoretical models do not link the empowerment of domestic workers and their employers in one particular study as well as aligning the workload of domestic workers with compensation.
- An empirical examination of the employment relationship between domestic workers and their

employers and the perspectives of the relationship are not well-known and for this reason, more research needs to be done.

The researcher believes research that focuses on the perspectives of the employment relationship of domestic workers and their employers would make a significant input to the labour issues and the domestic sector regulations. This study addresses the issues such as trust, cooperation, level of participation, that contribute to the strengthening and sustaining of the employment relationship of domestic workers and employers in the Mthatha district, South Africa. Together with the background of this study, this proposed study aims to do more research on the employment relationship between domestic workers and their employers.

Domestic work is viewed as one of the first professions and among the utmost essential for the running of households and society at large (ILO, Social Protection Policy Papers, 2016:3). Domestic work is understood by Pape (2016) as one of the most significant sectors in the informal economy, where an employment relationship can be defined. Research by Tshabalala and van Der Heever (2015) shares a different view by stating that the job of domestic workers may not be regarded as a highly recognized one, but, globally the employment of domestic workers does contribute positively to the economic feasibility of the working society. This notion is however viewed differently in the study (ILO, Social Protection Policy Papers, 2016) that the employment relationship does not have economic gain in the working society nor commercial interest at all associated with the duties performed by the worker. This means that, economically, employers do not gain anything by having domestic workers in their households; however, one would argue that there are economic as well as social benefits associated with having a domestic worker. Different academics support this concept by stating that domestic workers add value to their employer's social well-being (Tshabalala & van Der Heever 2015); also, that women who get economic pressures to provide for their families get more chances to do so when they have domestic workers (Mills & Govender, 2016).

The challenges of domestic workers and their employers are not unique to Mthatha, South Africa. One would argue that Covid-19 brought many challenges in the country which affected many households. This

is supported in the study by Dawood and Seedat-Khan (2022), the work environment is unforgiving. Many challenges to working life was brought by Covid-19 and in the side of domestic workers in South Africa, it further brought economic and emotional burdens (Dawood & Seedat-Khan, 2022).

According to a study by Jinnah (2020) these challenges are a global concern which is stated as complicated to regulate due to the household sector that is difficult to regulate given the challenges in accessing worksite. The study continues to argue that in South Africa new laws have been introduced in response to low compliance to tighten the regulatory space. Studies show that at least 75.6 million men and women were employed as domestic workers across the world and a quarter of them are males (ILO, 2023).

Domestic workers form a sizeable component of the global labour force. In Uruguay domestic workers constitute 8.7 per cent of the workforce; in South Africa 6.8 per cent of the employed population are in the domestic work sector. Domestic work in South Africa has its roots firmly embedded in a history of colonial oppression, racial segregation, and exclusion of domestic workers from legal protection (Fernandez, McGee, Albarazi, Brennan & Block, 2023). Domestic workers traditionally have been unskilled, mainly black women working for middle class families. A study by Anwar and Brukwe (2022) points out that the onset of Covid-19 has made the lives of domestic workers difficult especially women. This study continues to argue that the start of the pandemic has contributed to the challenges of working relationship between employer and domestic worker in the sense that when one reports for duty the employer would be uncomfortable welcoming the worker due to fear getting infected.

The concept of domestic workers according to the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), Article 1 includes: (a) the term "domestic work" means work performed in or for a household or households; (b) the term "domestic worker" means any person engaged in domestic work within an employment relationship; (c) a person who performs domestic work only occasionally or sporadically and not on an occupational basis is not a domestic worker. According to Jinnah (2020) domestic work is a type of informal employment, often undertaken by marginalized women who in most cases lack formal education, have unclear job descriptions, and no job

security. Domestic work has traditionally been a segment of the labour market which needs to be brought within the ambit of regulatory institutions operating in more 'modern' sectors (Anwar & Brukwe, 2023). In South Africa there have been moves to formalize the employment of domestic workers, with a minimum wage now being prescribed by law and workers being protected by labour laws of the country.

Despite these progressive laws many women who work as domestic workers still characterised with challenged on both size of the coin. Thus, domestic workers and their employers face challenges. Women from low-income backgrounds are mostly engaged in domestic work because it provides both income and, sometimes, shelter in the case of migrant domestic workers who live with their employers (Marchetti, Cherubini & Geymonat, 2021).

## 2. Theoretical Literature

### 2.1 Dynamics of Unequal Relationship of Domestic Worker and Employer

South Africa is considered by constant undertakings to create equality for all citizens, including marginalised employees, unequal working relationship is partially evidenced in the continuing over-representation of women, particularly black women, in low level and unskilled occupations, including that of domestic work. More emphasis is placed on research by Hunt and Samman (2020) in that the South African context has a growing demand of low skill domestic work with unequal historical power relations developing out of discrimination and exploitation against low-skilled female job seekers who are already more vulnerable in traditional domestic work. Because of the unequal status of the domestic worker and employer, there is reluctance to build good work relations due to power issued especially from the domestic worker side (Silvey & Parreñas, 2020). In addition, the nature of unequal relationships often compromises the decision of participants to participate in research as they involve unequal status where one party has a position of authority over the other.

The idea of unequal power balance is argued to have influence in the ability of domestic workers in negotiating their working conditions with their employers in relation to issues such as wages, also the power from the employers sometimes shift between a contractual to a more familial approach

based on what works better for the employer (De Villiers & Taylor, 2019).

### **3. Empirical Literature**

#### **3.1 Experiences Between the Domestic Workers and Their Employers**

Some of the experiences of domestic workers that impact on the employment relationship include, sexual harassment, which is argued to be one of the worst practices that domestic workers go through in their workplaces and is seen by Hejase (2015) as a recurrent challenge around the world. Supporting this view is research by Irumba (2020) who argued that most domestic workers, women in particular, worldwide are subjected to sexual harassment, violence, rape and all sorts of abuse by their current employers and end up leaving their employment.

Furthermore, communication which is the biggest barrier in any workplace is also experienced by domestic workers as it is sometimes problematic to get the message across and be understood and interpreted properly. Communication plays a critical role in any relationship, whether personal or professional and it creates better bonding and if it is managed effectively, it creates better understanding of issues (Obakpolo, 2015). The issue of language barrier is a major problem faced by domestic workers especially those employed by foreign nationals (Loganathan, Rui & Pocock, 2019).

##### **3.1.1 Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment, according to (ILO, 2015) is an undesirable conduct of any sexual nature which comes as an offense or intimidation to anyone, it is not physical assault, but include words or actions that refers to any sexual action such as comments about someone's sexual movement. In South Asia sexual harassment of workers seems to be the major problem with domestic workers listed among the most group of workers who are at great risk of being subjected to sexual harassment, which happens to both male and female, but women are confirmed to be the most who gets more likely to be affected by this behaviour which is due to the unequal gender relations prevalent to societies (Rahaman & Jahan, 2015).

##### **3.1.2 Vulnerability**

A vulnerability which is another issue that domestic workers face and is described by ILO (2013) as a person working in an environment where it is

almost impossible for them to fight for their rights or protect them from the abuse resulting in them being denied employment rights. Most domestic workers also become vulnerable in the sense that they work without an employment contract or any kind of formal agreement stipulating the terms of employment like hours of work, leave days and more (Gudibande & Jacob, 2017). However, the sectoral determination of domestic workers as specified in the Republic of South Africa Department of Labour (2002) provides that in a case where a domestic worker cannot understand the written particulars of their contract of employment, employers must ensure that these contents are explained in a language or manner that they will be understood.

Rahaman and Jahan (2015) also identify that domestic workers are the victims of both male and female employers, with male abusing the workers sexually while the female employers abuse their workers psychologically. Many domestic workers work under precarious and difficult conditions and are particularly vulnerable to abuses of their fundamental rights (ILO, 2007). In this research proposal, it is argued that from this abuse some domestic workers quit their jobs as they cannot take the abuse and some endure the pain just to keep their job more for social security purposes.

Furthermore, employers may negotiate on matters that are not regulated by the Sectoral Determination such as probationary periods, afternoon offs, weekend offs, savings account, etc., and nothing prevents any other condition to be included in the contract of employment which will set conditions which will be less favourable than those stipulated by the Determination (Republic of South Africa; Department of Labour, 2002). On the other hand, research by Tracy, Sieber and Moir (2014) also states that domestic workers may work without any contract of employment and lack of job security and therefore conditions of employment and working conditions may be negotiated individually and according to the specifications of the job.

Vulnerability of domestic workers is also talked about and experienced in Spain as highlighted in the research by Pavlou (2016). This research was conducted after observing the stage on which domestic workers become vulnerable. This work is looking at how the employment and migration law regime reflect on the use of sound rules in terms of structuring and reducing the exposure of domestic

workers in Cyprus and Spain. The issue of women being exposed to vulnerability is a major challenge as argued by Rahaman and Jahan (2015) as it brings down women's participation in the economic sector – an aspect that is seen to be very important to the economic development in every country.

### **3.1.3 Social Security**

Social security is defined by Trends (2017) as being the protection that a society offers to households and individuals and to guarantee access to health-care and to ensure income security, mainly in cases of unemployment, loss of a breadwinner, unemployment or work injury. This social security coverage exclusion of some domestic workers is highlighted in the information compiled by ILO as a very significant shortfall (Trends, 2017).

The significance of the high level of vulnerability of domestic workers is highlighted in the research by ILO, Social Protection Policy Papers (2016:2), where it is stated that domestic workers experience an enormous amount of discrimination in different forms and in different practices, like the fact that these victims are most of the time excluded from being covered by social security systems. However, the adoption of the Domestic Workers Convention, (No. 189) and the Domestic Workers Recommendation, 2011 (No. 201) associated with the Convention, together with the Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202), and the adoption of the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204), has resulted in the world taking an essential step in obtaining the labour and social security rights of domestic workers (Social Protection Policy Papers, 2016:1).

Despite the employment laws and social security provisions that exist in the 163 continents of Africa such as Asia and the Pacific, Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Middle East, North America and Europe; abuse and vulnerability of domestic workers remain a challenge (ILO, Social Protection Policy Papers, 2016). It is therefore appropriate to argue that existence of these laws do not automatically create a conducive environment for both domestic workers and their employers as there are barriers to extending the social security coverage, which amongst others are legal exclusion, lack of provisions to enrol domestic workers with multiple employers, voluntary rather than mandatory coverage (ILO, Social Protection Policy Papers, 2016).

## **3.2 Measures to Strengthen the Employment Relationship Between Domestic Workers and Employers**

Empowerment of domestic workers is an essential aspect in strengthening the employment relationship of domestic workers and their employers. This is supported in the study (Marais & van Wyk, 2015) where it is argued that empowering of domestic workers, which will be relevant in their daily realities of lives they are living, is crucial. This research continues to say the first step in empowering domestic workers is to recognise the enormity of their disempowered state.

Furthermore, fear of most domestic workers to express their concerns which is triggered by the way their employers conduct themselves and a manner in which their employers speak to them are some of the issues that exist in the employment relationship of domestic workers and employers (Parrenas & Silvey, 2016). It would therefore be fair to argue that should more domestic workers speak about these issues and find confidence in engaging their employers, their employment relationship would be enriched. Research by Marais and van Wyk (2015) supports this notion by emphasising that domestic workers lack confidence to engage their employers and therefore raises that legislative awareness could lead to informed employee voices if sanctioned properly. However, it should be noted that no matter how well drafted legislative can be, it would never on its own have the necessary effect needed to better the welfare of domestic workers, but what is seen to be appropriate are transformed hearts, souls and the way people think within the domestic worker sector (Kubjana, 2016).

## **3.3 Solutions for the Development and Sustainability of the Employment Relationship of a Domestic Worker and Employer**

As a solution to develop and sustain this employment relationship, there is a need to align the workload of domestic workers and compensation levels is highly recommended as this is perceived to be one of the challenges (Marais & van Wyk, 2015). In placing more emphasis, Kabeer, Razavi and van der Meulen Rodger (2021) claimed that domestic workers have experienced unpaid workloads especially during the Covid-19 era and calls for workload to be aligned with compensation.



Various academics have conducted research on stipulated minimum wage by the Department of Labour for betterment of employment conditions of domestic workers; however, a lot is not said on how to ensure that employers of domestic workers adhere to the stipulated conditions. Furthermore, the employment relationship of both parties should be formalised by having an employment contract which will govern the relationship. In placing more emphasis on the issue of having the employment contract as one of the solutions to develop and sustain the employment relationship, Gudibande and Jacob (2017) argue that the majority of domestic workers also become vulnerable in the sense that they work without an employment contract or any kind of formal agreement stipulating the terms of employment like hours of work, leave days and more and having one in place would improve the relationship

This is supported by Hunt and Samman (2020) in developing and sustaining the employment relationship by formalising it by having employment contract in place which is a change that will help domestic workers to benefit from Unemployment Insurance Fund. A study by Dawood and Seedat-Khan (2023) share the same view that an employment contract is a legal requirement that should be in place to govern the employment relationship and get domestic workers to register with Department of Labour to be eligible to claim for UIF benefits.

The importance of social security of domestic workers cannot be overemphasised as one of the solutions to sustain the employment relationship of domestic workers and their employers. ILO, Social Protection Policy Papers (2016) is of the opinion that, it is a worthy cause to extend social security to the domestic worker sector and the extension is also seen as an important factor of approaches to combat poverty and rejection. It is therefore reasonable to argue that in terms of social security, these domestic workers that are argued to have better working conditions in terms of wages are taken care of.

Social security regulations that exist for domestic workers is likely to provide better-quality formal jobs, secure a sizable economy market share that will impact positively upon the cohort of domestic workers who remain relatively marginalised but have managed to secure access to higher standards and securities in the traditional sector (Hunt

& Samman, 2020). It is however important to note that for a domestic worker to have proper access to social security, there are specific required documents that one has to provide (Vanyoro, 2021).

#### **4. Conclusion and Recommendations**

The aim of the study was to explore the employment relationship between domestic workers and employers in the Mthatha district, South Africa. A qualitative conceptual research approach was used in this study based on relevant data of existing literature to propose suitable solutions to address the research questions. It also provides an understanding of the dynamics of this employment relationship and factors that can contribute to the domestic workers' well-being.

The following questions were addressed in the study as follows: What experiences exist between the domestic workers and their employers; what measures can be put in place to strengthen the employment relationship between domestic workers and employer; what model can be set for the development and sustainability of the employment relationship of a domestic worker and employer.

Domestic workers experienced abuse in their jobs which also spills over to their families. Some domestic workers quit their jobs as they cannot take the abuse, and some endure the pain just to keep their job more for social security. Employers as argued in various studies treat their domestic workers with respect and value them; however, it is also debated that many challenges to working life in this employment relationship was brought by Covid-19, it further brought economic and emotional burdens. The start of the pandemic has contributed to the challenges of working relationship between employer and domestic worker in the sense that when one reports for duty the employer would be uncomfortable welcoming the worker due to fear getting infected. The legislative framework that is not sanctioned properly results in a lack of confidence in domestic workers in engaging with their employers for the betterment of their employment relationship. The study recommends that domestic workers should sign an agreement with their employers that stipulate fair labor practices, also, employers should get their domestic workers registered for UIF. Employers who enter into the employment relationship without signing an agreement should be held liable by the employer.

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# Employees Retention and Turnover in the South African Police Service: A Myth or Reality?

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**Abstract:** Employees retention and turnover in the public service with specific reference to the South African Police Service is becoming an urgent matter necessary to plan and achieve service delivery goals. The paper seeks to examine the relationship between employee retention and turnover in the South African Police Service (SAPS). The paper also seeks to establish whether retaining employees would ultimately improve service delivery in the SAPS. The paper makes use of mixed-method approach to interpret collected data from employees of the SAPS in a form of interviews and survey. The study revealed that the majority of the respondents are not aware that SAPS has a retention policy developed in 2017. The paper also concludes that to retain competent employees, the SAPS should implement strategies aimed at reducing voluntary and involuntary turnover. The paper also found that the retention policy developed by the SAPS is not effective. The SAPS do not attract and retain competent and qualified candidates; they are experiencing a shortage of competent and experienced employees. The paper makes suggestions that for the SAPS to be successful, it must ensure that retention policy and retention strategies are effectively implemented. Once the institution has employees that stay longer, then the employee turnover rate decreases.

**Keywords:** SAPS, Employees, Retention, Turnover, Service delivery, Performance management

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## 1. Introduction

The SAPS plays a key role in the security cluster. According to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, the SAPS is mandated to be structured to function in the national, provincial and local sphere of government. The SAPS Act 68 of 1995 was legislated to provide for the establishment, organisation and control of the SAPS. Section 2 of the SAPS Act 68 of 1995 give the National Commissioner of Police amongst others the power, duty and function to develop a plan before the end of each financial year, setting out the priorities and objectives of the policing for the following financial year, determine the fixed establishment of the Service and the number and grading of posts and to organise and reorganise the Service at National level into various components, units or groups. A variety of literature on how employee retention significantly impacts on employee turnover has been reviewed. The review includes the previous studies that could assist the comparison of previous findings with the current research findings.

This paper explores the relationship between two variables, namely employee retention and employee

turnover. An understanding of the definitions of the two variables plays a vital role in determining how one variable impact on the other. Retaining talented employees has become one of the major priorities in the South African public service departments. Section 195(1)(h)(i) of the Constitution provides that, in public administration, good human resource management (HRM) and career development practices to maximise human potential must be cultivated, and public administration must be broadly representative of the South African people, with employment and personnel management practices based on ability, objectivity, fairness, and the need to redress the imbalance of the past to achieve broad representation.

## 2. Conceptualisation of Retention and Turnover: SAPS Perspective

The following section clarifies the key concepts contained in this paper. Browell (2003:5) cited, in Mofokeng (2015:35), defines employee retention as keeping those members of staff that one wants to keep and not losing them from the organisation for whatever reason, especially to the competitors. According to Mohajane (2017), employee retention

is defined as initiatives, efforts or practices through which managers of public institutions seek to maintain stable workforces. Employee retention refers to the complete set of human resource policies and strategies espoused by an organisation in its human resource practices to ensure that the best possible talent is attracted and retained for the maximum period of time (Deas, 2017; Snyman, 2021). To have a sustained cost-effective institution, the SAPS should concentrate on retaining their competent and skilled employees, so that their turnover rate can be reduced. In the context of this paper, employee retention is defined as the process whereby employers go all out to attract competent and skilled employee who intend to leave their organisations to join others. This involves offering these employees better benefits.

For this paper, the term employee turnover is referred to as "a ratio of the number of workers in an institution who have left voluntary or involuntary in a particular period, divided by the number of employees who remains in the institution in a period". Employees referred to as officials of SAPS that are either employed as police officials in terms of the South African Police Service Act, 1995 (Act 68 of 1995) or civilians appointed in terms of the Public Service Act (Act No. 103 of 1994). Most police officials are performing operational duties and amongst others involved preventing, combating or investigating crime. Other police officials and civilians carry out support functions at divisions and components of the SAPS such: supply chain management, career management, personnel service, financial service, personnel, organisational development, human resource development, legal service, strategic management, technology management services, communication and liaison service.

SAPS is an institution that is established in terms of the South African Police Service Act, 1995 (Act 68 of 1995). Its core mandate is to create a safe and secure environment in the Republic. Armstrong (2015) defines performance management as a strategy and integrated process that delivers sustained success to organisations by improving the performance of the people who work in them and by developing the capabilities of an individual contributor and teams. Service delivery refers to the output of the activities of public administration and the reason for the existence of all public institutions (Chokoe, 2022).

### 3. Literature Review

#### 3.1 Employee Retention

Numerous studies have been conducted on employee retention and turnover both globally and locally. Sitati *et al.* (2016) found that there was a positive correlation between career development and employee retention in the hotel industry in Kenya. The study also found that career development had a correlation with remuneration, job promotion and employee recognition. According to Mohajane (2017) employee retention is defined as initiatives, efforts or practices through which managers of public institutions seek to maintain stable workforces. Mohajane's (2017) study contributes to research on job satisfaction and employee retention in the South African Public Sector, using South African Police Service as a reference point. The study creates awareness about employee's degree of satisfaction with SAPS key institutional factors. The study also highlights significant roles that managers should perform to retain employees in the SAPS and in the South African Public Sector in general. In his findings, he shows that probabilities for promotion and recognition constituted the highest dissatisfaction. The dissatisfaction was caused by the respondents' inability to foresee opportunities for promotions, and promotions not being based on rules, competence, and merit, but on unfair practices that favour some above others. Ogony & Majola (2018) research identified factors causing employee turnover in the public service, using KwaZulu-Natal Department of Arts and Culture as a reference point. The findings revealed that the cause of employee turnover at the KZN DAC are a lack of career advancement, lack of promotion, unsatisfactory salary, unsatisfactory working conditions and work stress. Zethu's study (2018) aimed to identify the push and pull factors and the reasons that are most related to voluntary turnover among the employees of the organisation. The study investigated retention in the SAPS. The findings revealed that the SAPS was considered a good employer. The most prevalent reason for employee turnover was found to be related to the perceived safety of individuals and the risk to employees' lives in carrying out their duties. He recommended that an effective retention strategy is implemented within the SAPS that includes career development, health and wellness, reward and recognition, work life balance, and leadership.



Magaji, Akpa & Ogundiwin's (2021) study examined the effect of career development and job security on employee retention of selected private universities in Ogun state, Nigeria. The study found that career development has a significant positive effect on employee retention, and there exist a positive relationship between job security and employee retention of selected private universities. The research found that career development and job security have significant effect on employee retention. The study recommended that the management of the five selected private universities should engage more on career development and job security to create ambience in the work environment that will encourage employee retention.

Sewela's (2023) study investigated the reasons for the Inkomati-Usuthu Catchment Management Agency's failure to retain qualified and competent technical employees with scarce skills, and their subsequently high turnover at this organisation. The primary purpose of the research was to identify the factors influencing the employee retention and turnover of technical employees with scarce skills at the Inkomati-Usuthu Catchment Management Agency. The focus of the research was on technical employees with scarce skills, namely, engineers, scientists, engineering technicians, hydrologists, geo-hydrologists, environmental officers, environmental control officers, and geographical information professionals. The study found that offering competitive salaries as well as an effective and efficient performance management system proved to be some of the best strategies to prevent employees from leaving the organisation. The research revealed that the Inkomati-Usuthu Catchment Management Agency has both a remuneration strategy and a performance management and development system; however, the implementation of the remuneration strategy and related policies is ineffective.

Retention management is one of the most important human resource management functions and one of the activities that impacts most critically on the performance of an organisation. Therefore, retention management can be regarded as central to the SAPS's capacity to deliver on its mandate, which is to ensure that all people in South Africa are and feel safe. In the absence of effective retention policies and practices, the SAPS is likely to experience a high turnover of employees, as well as rendering of poor-quality service to the people of South Africa.

### **3.2 Employee Turnover**

Employee turnover in the public service is a major concern due to the fact that it affects the provision of quality service, stability of services and the morale of the remaining employees. In Ahmad & Riaz (2011), turnover is defined as the rotation of workers around the labour market, amongst public institutions, jobs and occupations and between the states of employment and unemployment. Wyss (2004) states that employee turnover takes place when employees terminate their service based on some of the following reasons: migrating to other countries, transfer from one institution to another, death, retirement, resignation or dismissals. Lynch & Tuckey (2008) recognised that turnover can be positive for institutions because it's largely depending on who leaves and who stays. They further stated that turnover can provide an institution with opportunities to prevent stagnation, displace poor performers, introduce new information and help facilitate change. The law enforcement agencies possess unique characteristics that make turnover an even more pressing issue due to the cost of training replacement personnel.

High turnover has the potential to severely impair organisational performance and service delivery because in the police environment, to recruit and training members it is expensive, and it take one to two years to train student constable as an entry level to employment in the SAPS. Employee turn-overs comprise voluntary and involuntary turnover. Turnover is generally regarded voluntary when an employee chooses to leave an institution. Therefore, resignations are considered to be a voluntary turnover. On the other hand, turnover is generally regarded as involuntary when employee is forced to leave the institution due to amongst others poor performance or as a result of external factors such as death or illness. Therefore, service termination due to dismissal, retirement and death are considered to be involuntary turnover.

According to SAPS Annual Report 2018-2019, turnover rates provide an indication of trends in the employment profile of the SAPS. The turnover rates of the SAPS for 2018-2019 financial year were 5742. Reasons why employees left SAPS from 2017/18-2021/22 is shown in Table 1 on the next page.

Table 1 shows that, from 2017/2018 to 2021/2022, the employees of the SAPS that resigned are higher

**Table 1: Reason Why Employees Left SAPS From 2017/18 - 2021/22**

Turnover	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Total 2017-2022
Death	862	909	847	1435	1228	5281
Resignation	2039	2180	2137	1540	1901	9797
Expiry of contract	50	22	20	16	6	114
Discharge due to ill health	309	317	322	176	198	1322
Dismissal-misconduct	488	528	456	423	455	2350
Retirement	1412	1781	1291	2 538	1 786	8808
other	8	5	3	1	0	17
Total	5168	5742	5076	6 129	5 574	27689

Source: Author

than the employees retired followed by those who died. For those who resigned the past five years were 9797, while those who retired were 8808 and those who died were 5281. For those who dismissed and discharged due to ill-health are 2350 and 1322 respectively. Those that their contracts were expired were 114, while those while who falls in the category of others were 17. The total number of the turnover of the past five years was 27689.

#### 4. Research Methodology

The mixed method approach was used for data collection to validate the research findings through quantitative and qualitative methods. While purposeful non-probability sampling was used for the interview, random probability sampling from the unit of analysis was used for the questionnaire. The sample of the study encompassed a total of 250 employees taken from the three divisions from head office, namely HRM, Detective Service and Forensic Service. A total of 152 questionnaires were distributed to employees who are employed under the SAPS Act and Public Service Act from level 5 to level 13. The researcher conducted face to face, semi-structured interviews, with the use of open-ended questions with 10 police officials (Captain x 1, Lieutenant Colonels x 3, Colonels x 4 and Brigadiers x 2) working at Human Resource Management division.

#### 5. Data Analysis, Interpretation and Findings

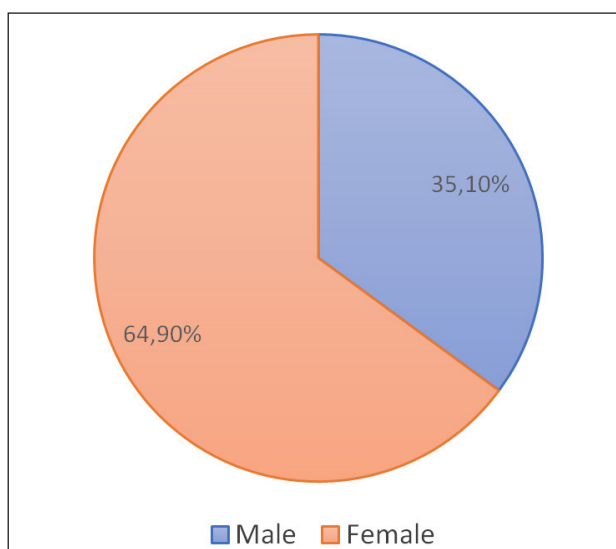
A descriptive data analysis method was employed for the analysis and interpretation. Statistics

Programme Software System was used to do the data analysis.

#### 5.1 Biographical Information

This section deals with information gathered from the questionnaire. The purpose of this profile is to elucidate the range of gender parity in the workforce of the SAPS.

The study sought to establish the gender distribution among the respondents. As per the percentages, the majority of the respondents were females by 64.9% (n=85) while 35.1% (n=46) were male. See Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1: Gender**

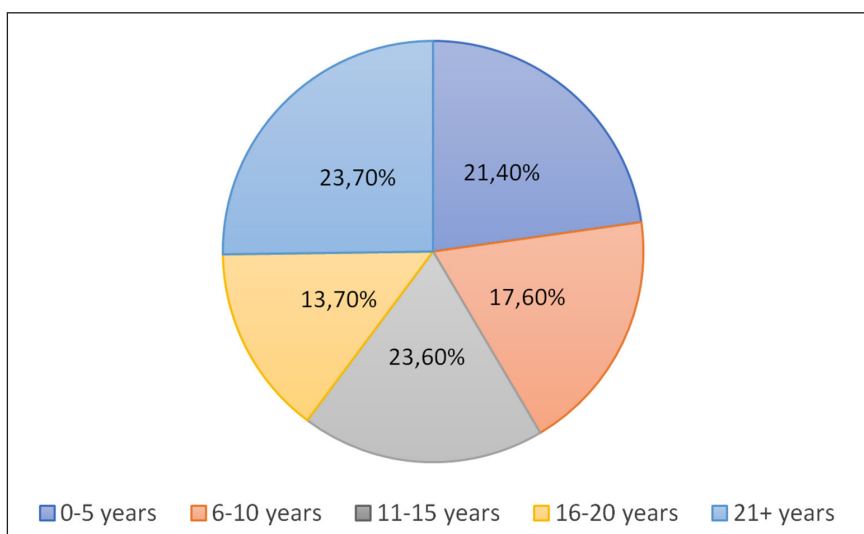
Source: Author

Figure 2 illustrates that a large proportion of the respondents had worked for the SAPS for more than 21 years (25.2%, n=31), followed by a proportion of 22.8% (n=28) who have worked for at most 5 years, an equal proportion of 18.7% (n=23) had worked either for 6–10 years or for 11–15 years, and 14.6% (n=18) had worked for 16–20 years. The data shows that the SAPS has experienced staff composition, which allows for mentorship and intergeneration skills among the employees. This was pointed out by Kahn and Louw (2016:742), who

claim that Generation Y (GY) (millennials) and Born Free (BFG) (Generation (GZ) are a tech-savvy generation but lack necessary management experience to occupy senior management positions. They require mentoring, coaching, and skills transfer that can be provided by Generation X (GX) and BBs before retiring.

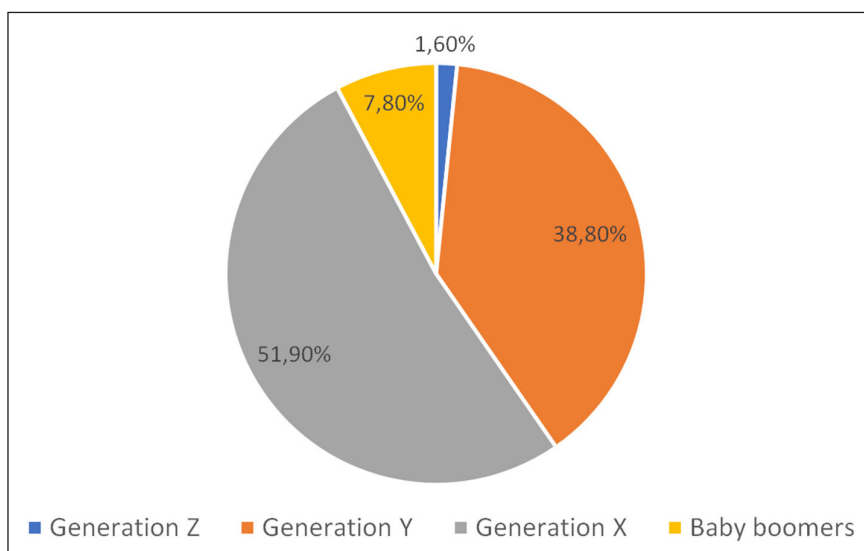
Figure 3 below shows the age group according to generations. The workforce of the SAPS comprises four generations, namely: the BBs, GX, GY and

**Figure 2: Years of Service**



Source: Author

**Figure 3: Age Group**



Source: Author

GZ, also known as the born free generation (BFG). Generation Z are people born after the dawn of democracy in 1994. Generation X comprised the biggest group of respondents, followed by generation Y. The figure shows that none of the participants are GZ (Born Free Generation). In the South African context, the Born Free Generation refers to the generation that is born in the era of democracy (Kahn & Louw, 2016:741). From the data, it is clear that the majority is GX, followed by the Millennials. The presence of GX is vital, as they bring effective methods and instinctive methods of executing tasks, as underscored by Tulgan (1977:33). Tulgan (1977:33) claims that GX is a workforce that creates research theories to enable them to substantiate their evidence and findings. The generation mix allows for inter-generational interaction and knowledge sharing opportunities between the older generation and the younger generation, as highlighted by Lancaster and Stilman (2010:41).

### 5.2 Quantitative Analysis

There were 10 items that were measuring retention management which was composed of retention policy and strategy (4 items), turnover (3 items) and reward management (3 items). The levels of

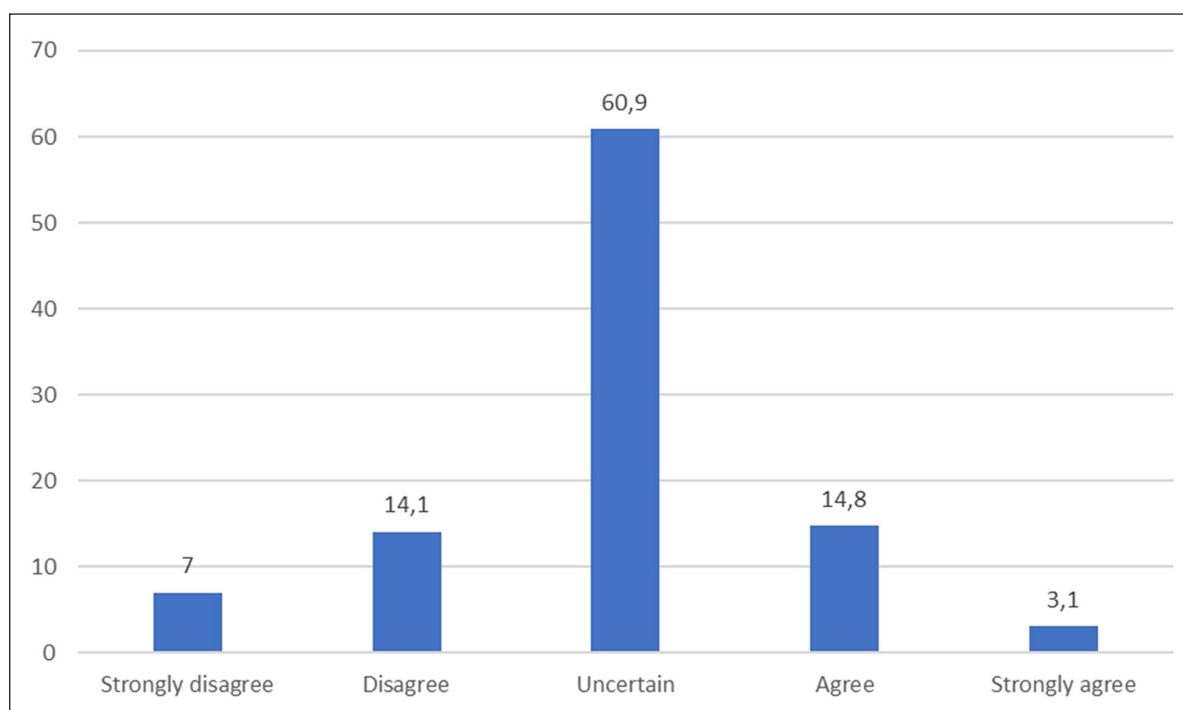
agreement of the five sub constructs are discussed in the next subsections.

Figure 4 illustrates that about 60.9% were uncertain about the existence of a retention policy while 21.1% disagreed and 17.9% agreed and with a mean of 2.93. The data shows that the majority of respondents are not aware that the SAPS has a retention policy that was developed in 2017.

Figure 5 shows that 51.2% of respondents are uncertain that SAPS is using a scarce skills policy as a retention strategy, while 41.6% agree and 7.2% disagree with a mean of 3.38. The data shows that the majority of respondents are not aware that SAPS is using scarce skills policy as a retention strategy.

Figure 6 on the next page indicates that 51.6% of respondents are uncertain that the retention strategy used by the SAPS is effective, while 29.9% disagree and 18.5% agree with a mean of 2.81. The data shows that more than 50% of respondents have no knowledge that the retention strategy used by the SAPS is effective. It may be also assumed that the 51.6% uncertainty may include BFG and GY since the BFG are new to the institution and the GY have 6 to 15 years of service.

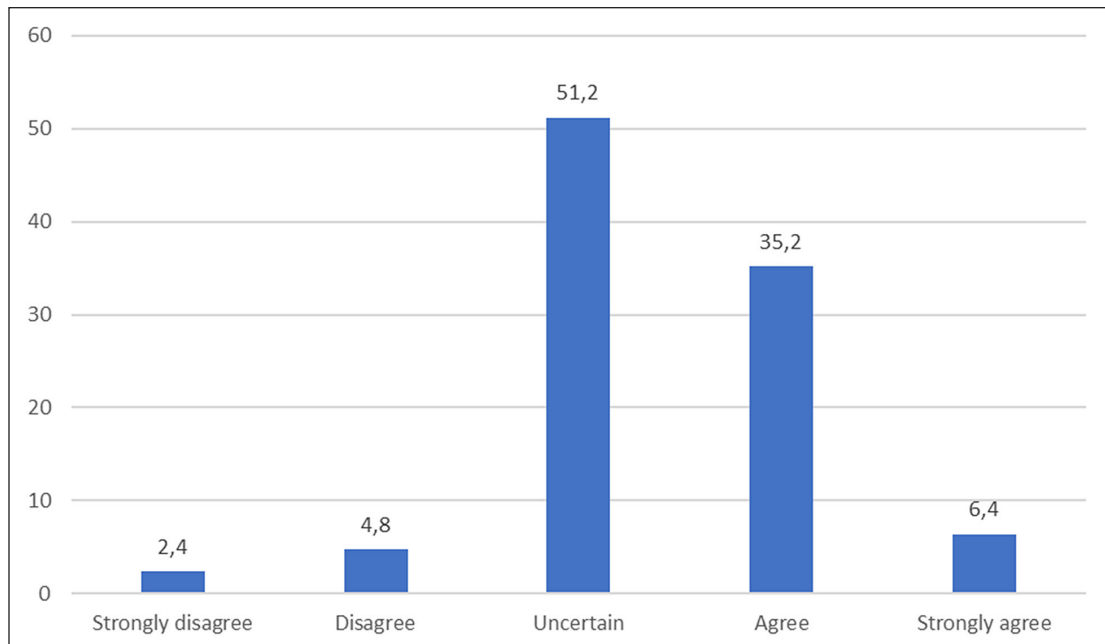
**Figure 4: The SAPS Doesn't Have a Retention Policy**



Source: Author

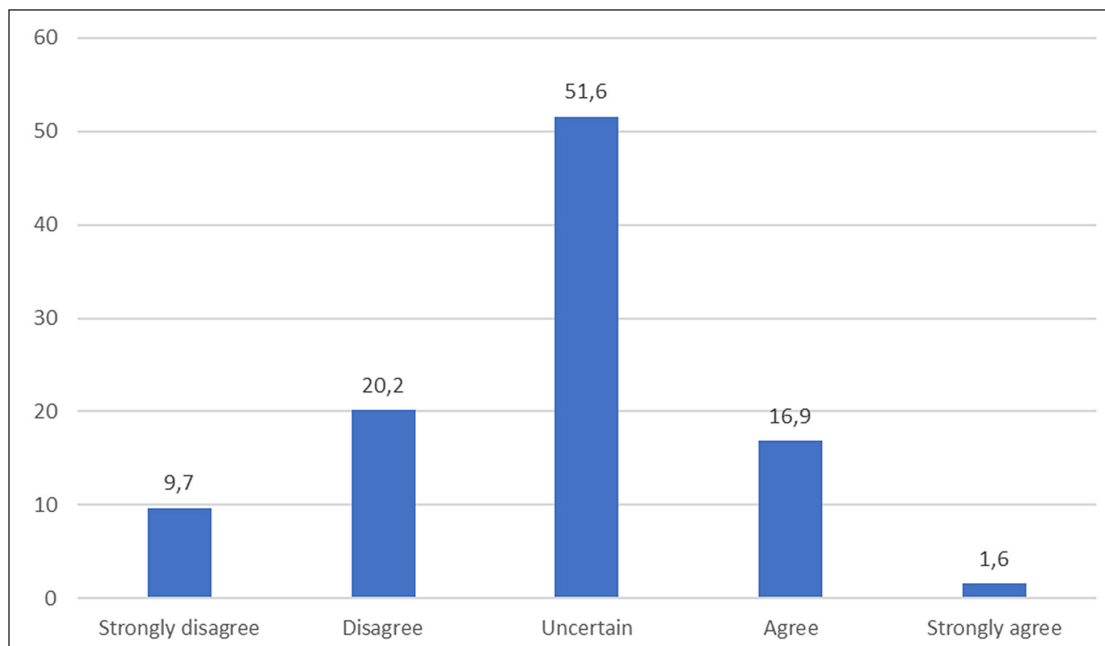


**Figure 5: SAPS is Using a Scarce Skills Policy as a Retention Strategy**



Source: Author

**Figure 6: The Retention Strategy Used By the SAPS is Effective**



Source: Author

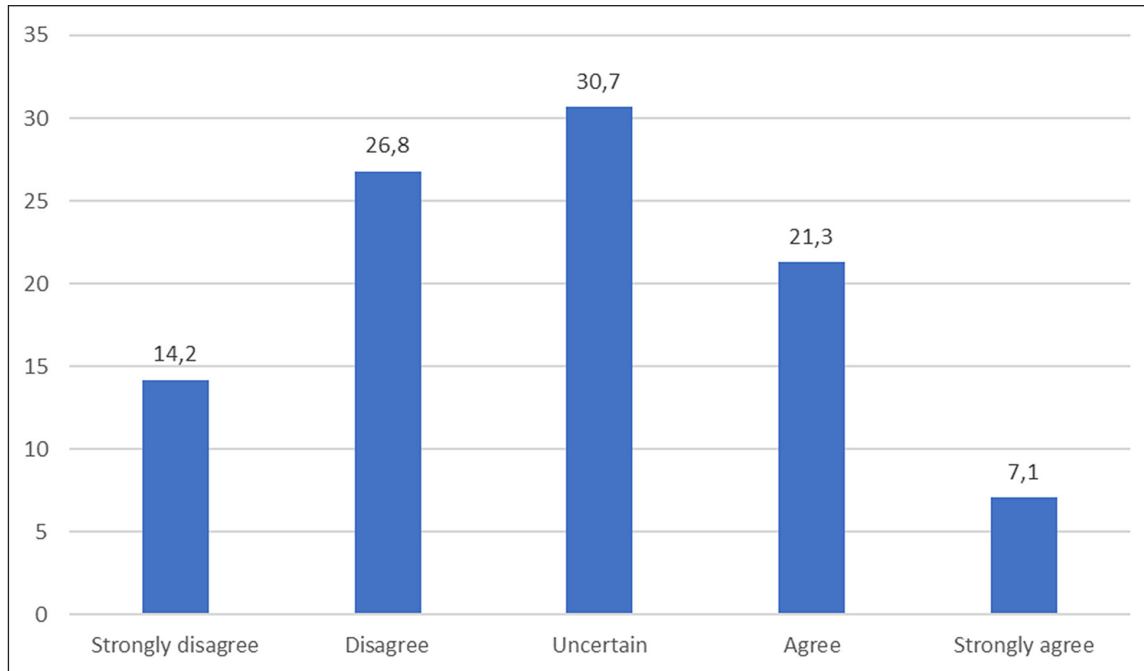
Figure 7 on the next page reveals that 41% of respondents do not agree that the SAPS attracts and retains competent and qualified candidates, and about 30.7% were uncertain, while 28.4% agree with a mean of 2.80. The data shows that the majority of respondents agree that the SAPS doesn't attract and

retain competent and qualified candidates. In order for the institution to be successful, it has to ensure that correct recruitment, placement and retention strategies are implemented. Once the institution has selected the right people in the right place, it is important to retain their talent.

Figure 8 shows that 49.2% of respondents agreed that the SAPS have policies to manage the exit of employees and 36.5% were uncertain while 14.3% disagreed with a mean of 3.37. The South African Police Service

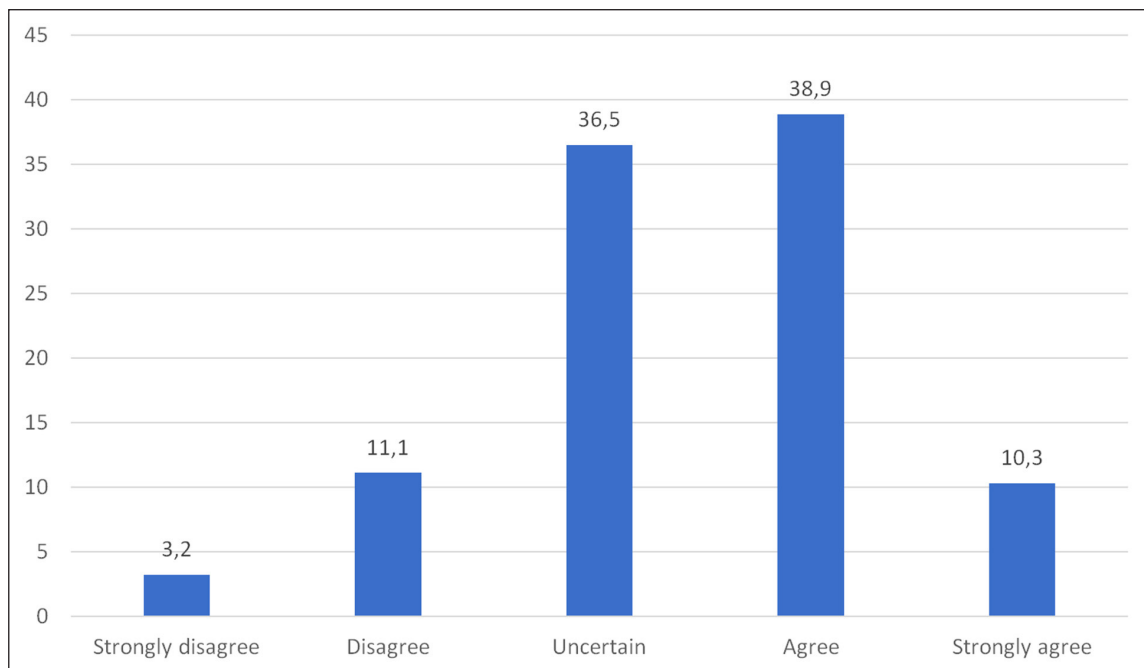
developed National Instruction 3 of 2017 that regulate service termination in the Service. This Instruction is applicable to all employees appointed in terms of the SAPS Act and the Public Service Act.

**Figure 7: The SAPS Attracts and Retains Competent and Qualified Candidates**



Source: Author

**Figure 8: The SAPS Have Policies to Manage the Exit of Employees**

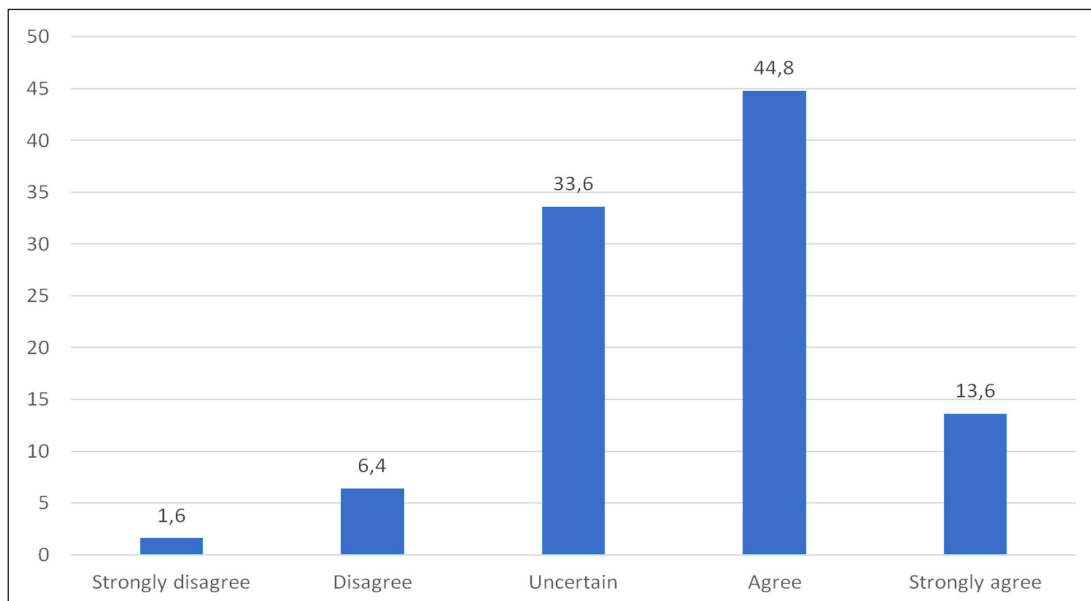


Source: Author

Figure 9 illustrates that 58.4% of respondents agreed that SAPS conduct exit interviews, 33.6% were uncertain and 8% disagreed with a mean of 3.62 ( $M = 3.62, SD = .86$ ). Employees leave institutions for many reasons, oftentimes the reasons are unknown to their employers. The SAPS need to listen to employees' needs and implement retention strategies to make them feel valued and engaged in order to keep them.

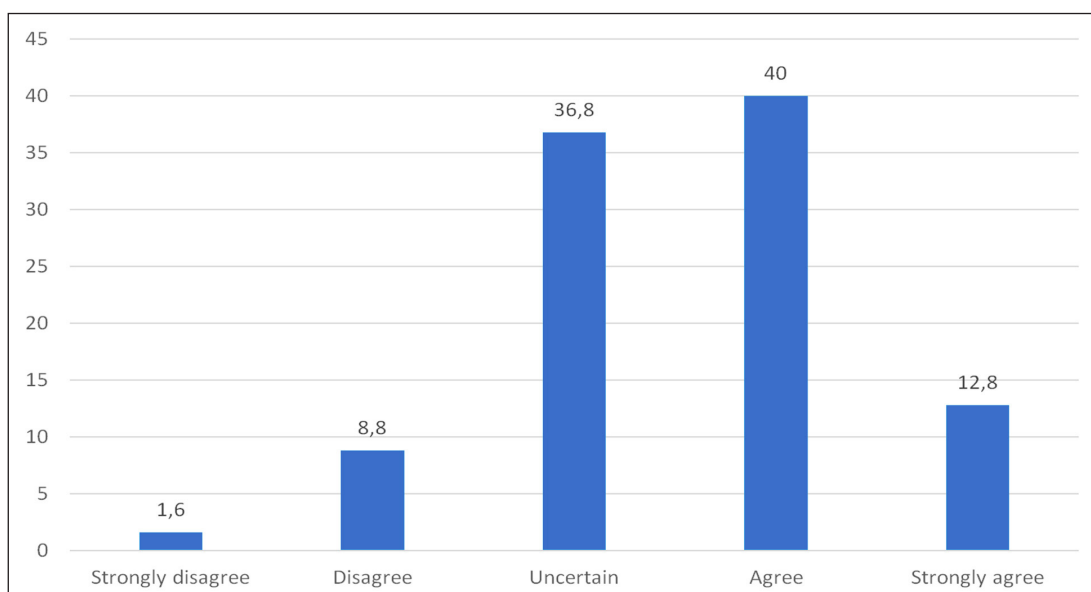
Figure 10 reveals that 52.8% of respondents agreed that the information on terminations is available for their division/component while 36.8% were uncertain and 10.4% disagreed and the mean was 3.54. The South African Police Service developed National Instruction 3 of 2017 that regulate service termination in the Service. This Instruction is applicable to all employees appointed in terms of the SAPS Act and the Public Service Act.

**Figure 9: SAPS Conduct Exit Interviews**



Source: Author

**Figure 10: Information on Terminations is Available for Your Division/Component**



Source: Author

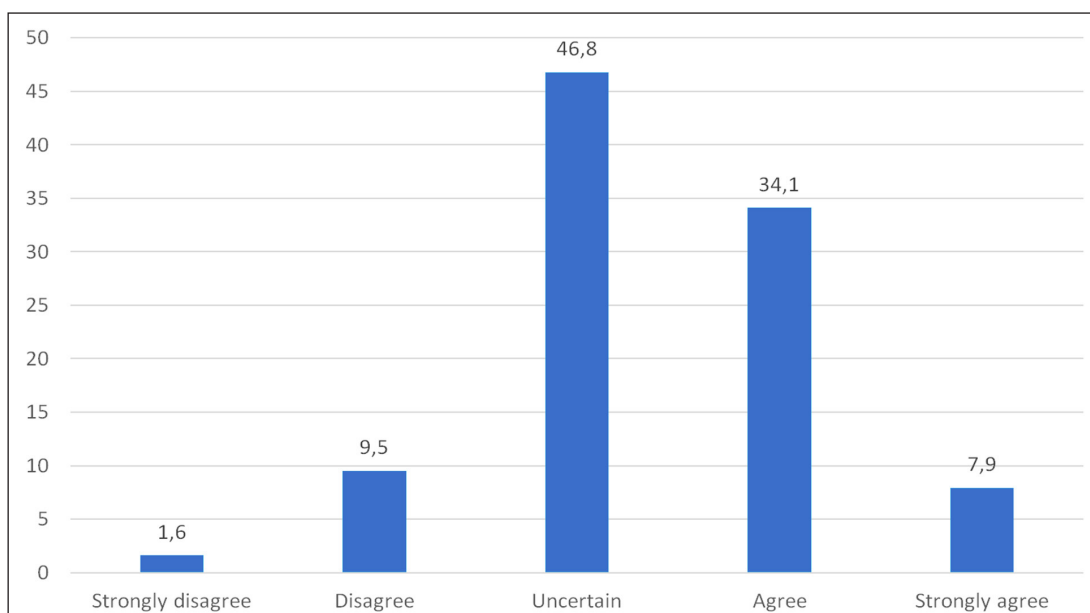
Figure 11 shows that 46.8% of respondents were uncertain while 42% agreed and 11.1% disagreed with a mean of 3.37. The turnover rates of the SAPS for 2018-2019 financial year were 5742. Reasons why employees left SAPS from 2015/16–2019/20 is tabulated in the annual report. According to SAPS Annual Report 2018-2019, turnover rates provide

an indication of trends in the employment profile of the SAPS.

### 5.2.1 Reasons for Resigning from SAPS

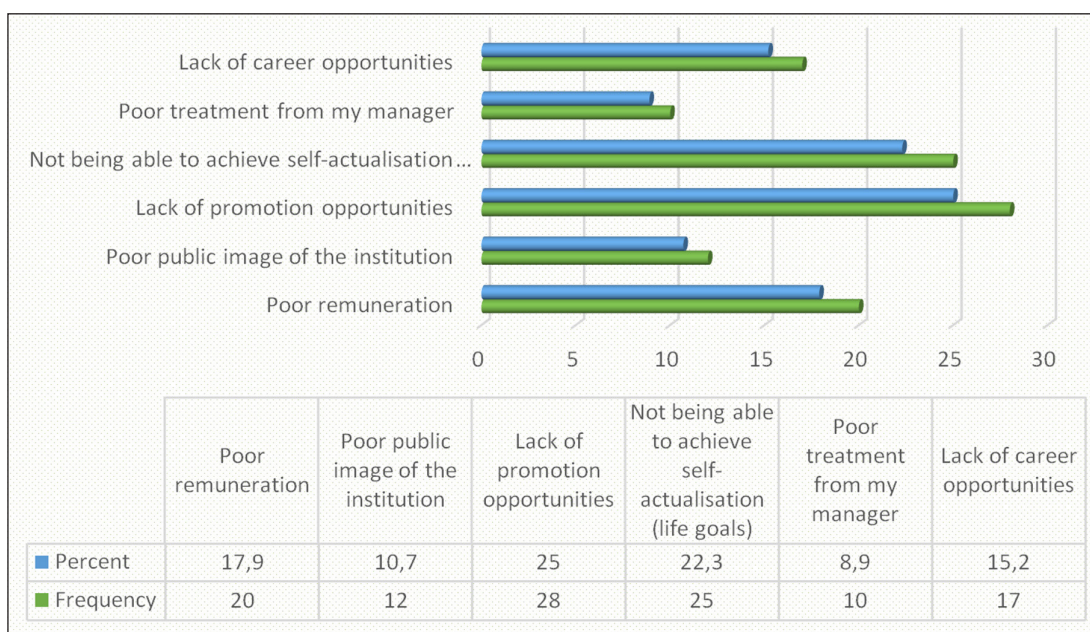
The respondents were asked to indicate the reasons they might give if they resign from the organisation and the information is shown in Figure 12.

**Figure 11: Information on the Reasons for Termination is Available in the SAPS Report**



Source: Author

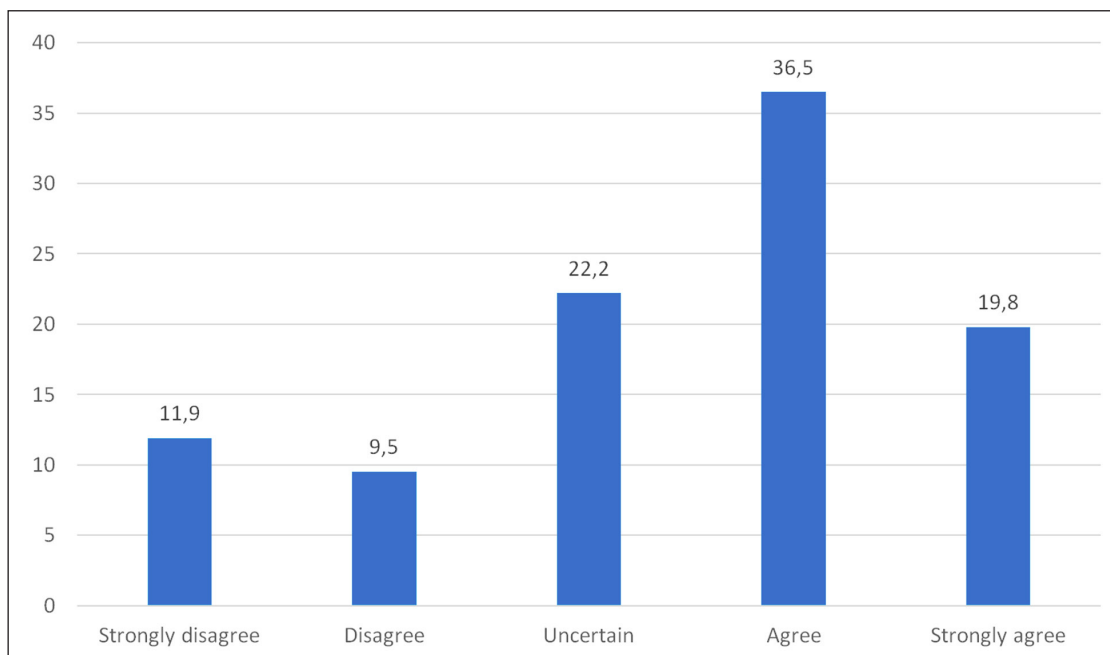
**Figure 12: Reasons One Can Resign From Organisations**



Source: Author



**Figure 13: The SAPS Do Not Provide Incentives to Their Employees**



Source: Author

A quarter of the respondents indicated lack of promotion opportunities as the reason they might leave the organisation, 22.3% indicated not being able to achieve self-actualisation goals, 17.9% indicated poor remuneration, 15.2% indicated lack of opportunities, 10.7% indicated poor public image of the organisation and 8.9% said it will be because of poor treatment from their managers.

Figure 13 illustrates that 56.3% of respondents agreed that SAPS do not provide incentives to their employees, 22.2% were uncertain and 21.4% disagreed and the issue had a mean of 3.43 ( $M = 3.43$ ,  $SD = 1.25$ ). Majority of the respondents indicate that even if the SAPS employees perform well, they don't get incentives.

Figure 14 on the next page shows that majority of respondents, 61.9% disagreed that they received performance bonus while 20.7% agreed and 17.5% were uncertain with a mean of 2.21 ( $M = 2.21$ ,  $SD = 1.24$ ). In SAPS, performance management is managed in accordance with the National Instruction 1/2005 of the Performance Enhancement Process, Public Service Regulations, 2016 and SAPS Employment Regulations, 2018. Employees in the South African Police Service are, for the purpose of performance management, classified into two categories. The first category includes employees of the Service

from post levels 1 to 12 and from Constable up to Colonel, and the second category includes level 13 and upwards or from brigadier to general.

### 5.2.2 Inferential Statistics on the Constructs

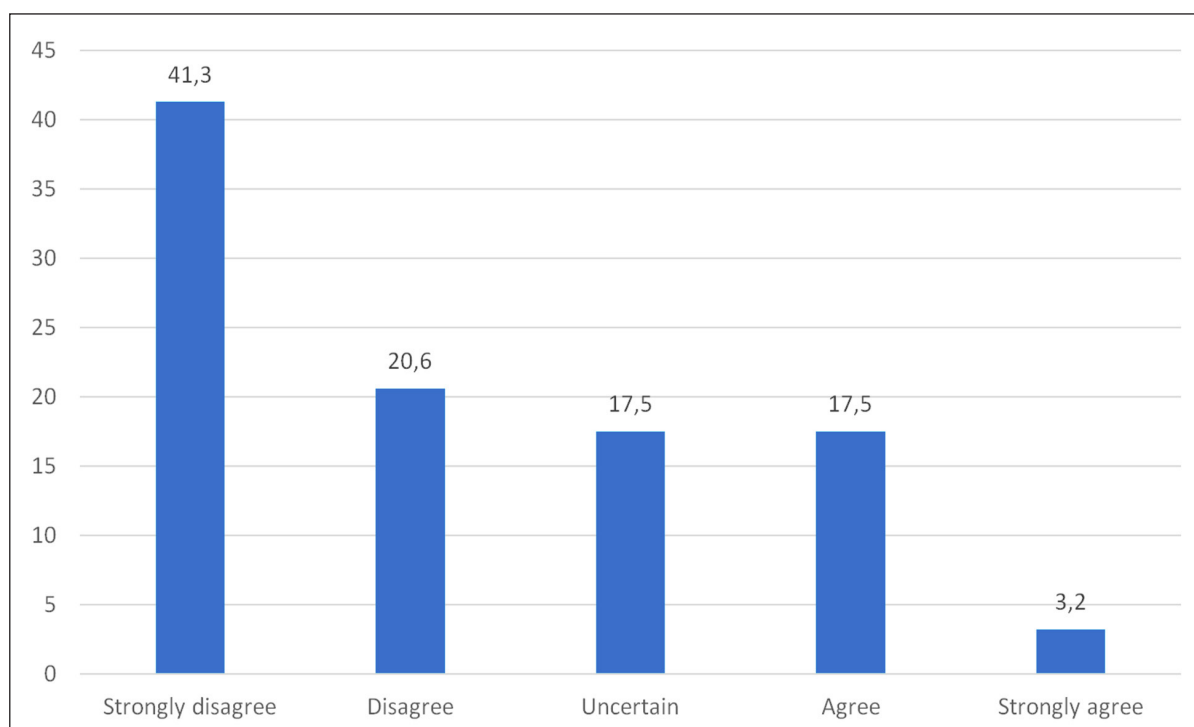
The inferential statistics were conducted using correlation analysis. Correlation analysis was used to determine the relationship among the variables and how retention management impact on turnover.

### 5.2.3 Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation coefficient was used to determine the extent of the relationship between retention management and turnover. The correlation analysis was performed at the 5% level of significance. Cohen (1988) guidelines which states that if  $r = .10 - .29$  its a low effect (low correlation);  $r = .30 - .49$  its a medium effect (moderate correlation) and  $r = .50 - .99$  its a large effect (strong correlation) was used to measure the extent of the association between variables.

Table 2 on the next page shows that the value of correlation is 0.322 and it indicates that Turnover had a statistically significant positive correlation with retention management. High values in turnover were associated with high values in retention management. The relationship of turnover with retention management was of medium effect. Employee turnover and retention are two sides of the same coin.

**Figure 14: I Have Received Performance Management Bonus**



Source: Author

**Table 2: Correlation Between Retention Management and Turnover**

	Retention Management	Turnover
Retention Management	1	.322
Turnover	.322	1

Source: Author

If the institution has high employee retention, you will experience low employee turnover. If your employee turnover is 70% per year, your employee retention will be 30%.

### 5.3 Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative findings of the study are discussed below briefly. The data obtained through qualitative interviewing were analysed using Atlas Ti.9. The results presented in this section are obtained from ten interviews. The profile of the respondents is shown in Table 3 on the next page.

Only employees falling under the SAPS Act were interviewed. Six (6) males and four (4) females participated in the interviews. The ranks of the respondents were 1 x Captain, 3 x Lieutenant Colonel,

4 x Colonel, and 2 x Brigadier. Their ages ranged from 31 to 60 years, with five aged between 51-60 years (BB), four between 41-50 years (GX), and one aged between 31-40 years (GY). Five of the officers had 21-35 years' experience in the force, three had 11-20 years, and two had 1-5 years. Nine possessed university degrees, with five of them being post-graduate degrees, while only one had attained secondary education.

The question was asked from respondents what are retention management strategies and how effective are they?

#### 5.3.1 Retention Management Strategies

Five key concepts were obtained on issues on retention management strategies, as shown in Table 4 on the next page.

**Table 3: Profile of the Respondents**

ID	Gender	Rank	Age	Tenure	Qualification
Respondent 1	Female	Captain	51 – 60 years	21 – 35 years	Secondary
Respondent 2	Female	Lieutenant Colonel	41 – 50 years	11 – 20 years	Post graduate degree
Respondent 3	Male	Colonel	31 – 40 years	1 – 5 years	Post graduate degree
Respondent 4	Male	Colonel	51 – 60 years	21 – 35 years	Post graduate degree
Respondent 5	Female	Colonel	41 – 50 years	11 – 20 years	Degree
Respondent 6	Male	Brigadier	51 – 60 years	11 – 20 years	Post graduate degree
Respondent 7	Female	Brigadier	51 – 60 years	21 – 35 years	Degree
Respondent 8	Male	Lieutenant Colonel	41 – 50 years	1 – 5 years	Post graduate degree
Respondent 9	Male	Lieutenant Colonel	41 – 50 years	21 – 35 years	Degree
Respondent 10	Male	Colonel	51 – 60 years	21 – 35 years	Degree

Source: Author

**Table 4: Retention Management Strategies**

	Key Concept	Occurrence
<b>Sub-theme: Retention management strategies</b>	• Retention management policy developed by compensation component	6
	• Measures in place for retaining employees	4
	• No retention strategy	3
	• No in-house research to define problem	1
	• Skilled and experienced employees leaving the organisation	1
	Totals	14

Source: Author

Question: What are retention management strategies?

Respondents 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8: Retention management policy developed.

Six out of the ten respondents mentioned the retention policy developed by compensation component, and two of them also mentioned measures in place for retaining employees. Respondent 4 said that there is a retention management policy developed by a compensation component. This was supported by respondent 2, who mentioned that there is a retention management strategies/policy that has been recently developed. Respondent 5 also concurred by saying that previously they did not have a retention policy but approved it in 2018. According to respondent 7, the retention policy was recently developed and approved. She further indicated that one cannot be retained if they cannot even direct their student correctly to retention. She said it was a nice methodology in practice where there are a lot of things outstanding

for retention strategy to really to be optimised. She mentioned that they do not have occupational classification, and they do not do occupational classes. She was of the opinion that they cannot have systems running in terms of job titles, job description, PEP or other elements that are linked with their occupation. She emphasised that one cannot link the job titles if they do not have an occupational framework. She concluded by saying that her concern was that it is still not in place. Respondent 8 also indicated that the only retention management document that he knew about is the retention policy that was approved in 2017 that is cumbersome to address the retention issues within the organisation.

Respondents 4, 5, 6 and 8: Measures in place for retaining employees.

In terms of measures in place for retaining employees, respondent 6 indicated that there is a retention policy that has been drafted in 2017 and it has been

approved but it is not yet fully implemented, which means it is not working for the SAPS. Respondent 6 also said on paper it is there, but it is not applied within the SAPS, even spontaneously. Respondent 6 also indicated that even if retention policy was approved lately there were measures in place in terms of retaining people like if one can work in an environment, they will be promoted, they won't apply outside, and they will automatically be retained in the SAPS because of following a certain career path. He emphasised that the retention policy is not yet operational. Respondent 9 said they did not have retention strategies per se but have retention strategy documents currently that must be rolled out for comment. He believed that the police realised that retention is important specifically because the cost to train a police officer is too expensive. Therefore, strategy was documented but not rolled out yet.

Respondents 1, 3 and 10: No retention strategy.

Three respondents indicated that the absence of retention strategy with one of them (respondent 1) indicating that they have no idea what retention management strategy is.

### 5.3.2 Effectiveness of Retention Management Strategies

Respondent 10: No in-house research to define problem.

Respondent 10 indicated that the retention strategies are not effective. He said that one of the main reasons for career development and retention strategies of not being effective is that there is no in-house research to actually define the problem and investigate what are the root causes. He was quoted as saying, "how can you fix something if you don't know where it is". Respondent 2 said that as far as implementation, she cannot declare how effective it is because it is still new.

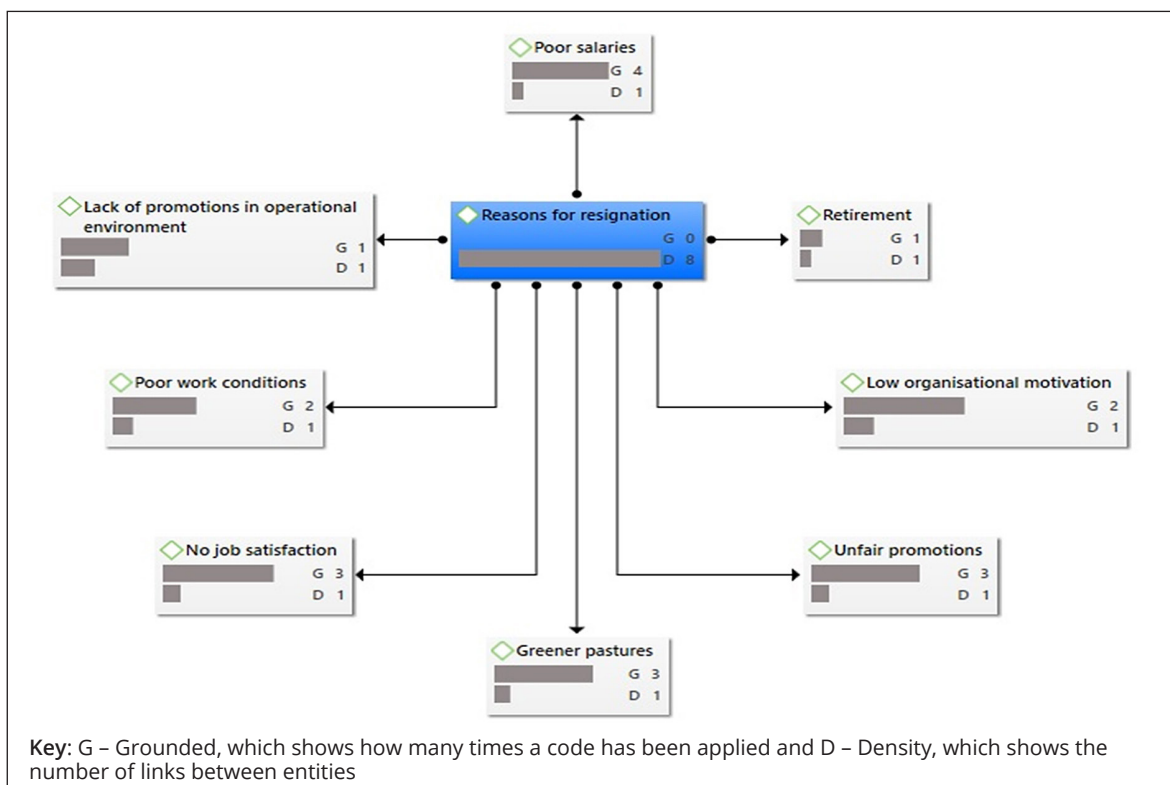
### 5.3.3 Reasons for Resignation

The issue of reasons for resignation resulted in eight key concepts, as shown in the network diagram in Figure 15.

Question: What are the common reasons why employees left the SAPS?

Respondents 2, 4 and 10: Poor salaries.

Figure 15: Reasons for Resignation



Source: Author



Four respondents indicated that the reason for resignations was poor salary. They said that:

Respondent 1: "Working conditions, ad pay, bad workplace, racism, sexism, and abuse from seniors. You don't get promoted because you are a certain race or gender (people are negative because of that)."

Respondent 2: "Unfair promotions. Irregularities in appointment. Lack of promotions in operational environment. Salary."

Respondent 4: "Pension fund at risk, greener pastures."

Respondent 10: "Financial matters, no job satisfaction, low morale and stress."

Three respondents mentioned greener pastures. Respondent 3 said that people leave the organisation for different reasons, either by retirement, greener pastures, or personal reasons like resignations, since people feel unhappy when the organisation is not motivating. Respondent 4 indicated pension fund at risk and greener pastures, while respondent 6 said no job satisfaction and greener pastures. No job satisfaction was also mentioned by respondents 7 and 10. Respondent 7 said there was a lack of recognition and mobility, while respondent 10, apart from financial matters, also indicated no job satisfaction, low morale and stress as reasons for resignations.

Three people mentioned unfair promotions. Respondent 2 indicated apart from poor salaries said unfair promotions, irregularities in appointment and lack of promotions in operational environment, citing them as reasons for resignations. Respondent 8 also concurred by indicating that the employees were not happy with promotional processes, and not happy with the way they are treated at work. Apart from poor salaries, respondent 9 also mentioned working conditions, bad workplace, racism, sexism and abuse from seniors. According to respondent 9, employees are resigning due to more problems in terms of employment equity and performance planning. According to respondent 5, there are no career opportunities and people stay in ranks for long.

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The main aim of this paper was to explore the relationship between employee retention and turnover in the South African Police Service and also seeks

to establish whether retaining employees would ultimately improve service delivery in the SAPS. The study found that the majority of the employees were not aware that the SAPS has a retention policy that was developed in 2017. The study also found that SAPS do not provide incentives and bonuses to their employees. The study found that the retention strategy used by SAPS is not effective. The study also found that the SAPS do not attract and retain competent and qualified candidates; they are experiencing a shortage of competent and experienced employees. From the correlation analysis, this paper found that the relationship between retention management and turnover was of medium effect. Retention management has an impact on turnover.

### 6.1 The Author Makes the Following Recommendations Regarding Retention Management in the SAPS:

- Retention policy and strategy should be implemented effectively to support the SAPS to retain the best employees, especially those with scarce skills.
- The SAPS should implement the Performance Management and Development System and pay incentives and performance bonuses to the employees that are performing their duties well.
- HRM practitioners should integrate talent management with HRM practices when it comes to recruiting, selection, HRD, retention, transfers, placement and performance management.

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