

**THE ROLE OF COOPERATIVES IN JOB CREATION AND SUSTAINABLE
LIVELIHOODS: THE CASE OF LEPELLE-NKUMPI MUNICIPALITY, LIMPOPO
PROVINCE**

by

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DEDICATION

To my loving and caring family for their unconditional support and understanding for the time I was unable to spend with them while embroiled in this challenging but rewarding academic journey.

DECLARATION

I declare that the mini-dissertation entitled “THE ROLE OF COOPERATIVES IN JOB CREATION AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS: LEPELLE-NKUMPI MUNICIPALITY, LIMPOPO PROVINCE” is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references and that this work has not been submitted for any other degree at any other institution.

.....
Full Names

.....
Date

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- The Limpopo Province Department of Social Development, for giving me permission to conduct the study.

ABSTRACT

This qualitative exploratory case study looked at how cooperatives helped in job creation and sustainable livelihood in Lepelle-Nkumpi Municipality in Limpopo Province. The study had three objectives which were to explore the functions and nature of cooperatives, to determine their relevance and purpose in improving the living standards of communities, to assess their contribution to job and sustainable livelihood creation and to make recommendations on strategies to improve the contribution of cooperatives to job and sustainable livelihood creation. Seven cooperatives in the municipality involved in agriculture, food processing, ranching, bread making, capacity building and empowerment were studied. Semi-structured face-to-face interviews with 18 participants, 9 cooperative managers and 9 beneficiaries were conducted. Participants were chosen using a non-probability sampling technique. The eight-step descriptive qualitative data analysis method developed by Tesch was used to analyse the primary study data. The results indicated that cooperatives only made a small contribution to the development of stable jobs and means of subsistence. The lack of coherent and clear recruitment policies, gaps in training and acquired skills for managing the cooperatives, delayed provision of subsidies, inability to penetrate the market, lack of product distribution strategies and best practice strategies for expanding cooperative operations all hampered their role in job creation and sustainable livelihoods. The study makes important recommendations to cooperatives management, the Department of Social Development and the Municipality of Lepelle-Nkumpi for the purpose of strengthening the contribution of cooperatives to job creation and sustainable livelihoods.

Keywords: Cooperatives, job creation, sustainable livelihoods

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AsgiSA	Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
LimDev	Limpopo Economic Development Enterprise
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
IPAP 2	Industrial Policy Action Plan 2
LED	Local Economic Development
LEDA	Limpopo Economic Development Agency
LIBSA	Limpopo Business Support Agency
NAG	Network Action Group
NDA	National Development Agency
NDP 2030	National Development Plan 2030
NIPF	National Industrial Policy Framework
NYDA	National Youth Development Agency
SACBC	Southern African of Bishops Conference
SACCOS	Savings and Credit Co-operative Society
SALGA	South African Local Government Association
SASSA	South African Social Security Agency
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEDA	Small Enterprise Development Agency
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
SONA	State of the Nations Address
TIL	Trade and Investment Limpopo
WES	Women Empowerment Strategy

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CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Unemployment and job creation are the most important variables in raising the standard of living of people around the world (Chibba & Luiz, 2011; Chantiandiarara, 2019). Cooperatives have become an indispensable tool in many nations to promote community initiatives to create jobs and secure livelihoods (Mhembwe & Dube, 2017). In emerging nations in Asia, Latin America, and Africa, cooperatives in smallholder agriculture generate the majority of agricultural commodities. Some of the people who live on these continents rely mostly on agriculture for their livelihood. However, their population continue to encounter difficulties with their declining agro-ecological situation and rising agricultural product costs (Pujara, 2016; Zantsi, 2021). Countries in Latin America like Argentina, Chile, Cuba, and Mexico exhibit many cooperative development possibilities. These nations get higher levels of financial and monetary support from the government. Additionally, they have widened connections between social movements and groups of grassroots organisations and reinforced community-based resistance to neoliberal policies (Giovannini & Vieta, 2017). Cooperatives and joint venture businesses in Asia, according to Mazzarol, Simmons, and Limnios (2014), constitute a special sort of organisation with a dual purpose that focuses on both economic and social goals. According to Mazzarol, Simmons, and Limnios (2014), the cooperatives established in Asian nations were essential for fostering economic growth, creating jobs, and addressing market flows.

As Cook (2018) contends, in developed countries like the United States, cooperative longevity is linked to a number of elements. These qualities include the capacity for multiple cycle adaptation and the aptitude for growth via a developed embedded mechanism known as generation cooperative genius. This means that cooperatives in developed countries can cope with market failures and contract costs, as well as monitor the health, financial resources, asset information and team performance of the cooperatives to achieve their goals (Birchall, 2013). West African countries like Nigeria are known for adhering to cooperative principles among the agricultural cooperatives in Ayo. These agricultural cooperatives enabled women and small

farmers to secure their needs for sustainable livelihoods and entitlements. More precisely, the seizure and use of market opportunities by the farmers and women had contributed more effectively to alleviate poverty and hunger (Badiru, Yusuf & Anozie, 2016).

According to Mhembwe and Dube (2017), rural cooperatives in African countries like Zimbabwe contributed to the development of sustainable livelihoods. They provide basic community services and access to markets. As a result, members of the communities are being productive in agriculture, small and medium-sized enterprises, and small and medium enterprises in Shurungwi District. In India's disadvantaged areas, cooperatives connected to cotton exporters are aggressively pushed to boost the social and economic development of the community (Shah, 2016).

Self-reliance is a strong culture in developing countries like Kenya and has been used for numerous development efforts in the form of cooperatives. According to Lodiaga (2020), Kenyan development assistance amounted to US\$770 million in 2005, has steadily increased since 2002 to support a variety of cooperatives. However, not all of the cooperatives in existence in Kenya have proven to be successful. In a similar vein, there is insufficient information on the actual impact of financial beneficence of cooperatives on the lives of Kenya's poor (Czachorska-Jones, 2019). Nevertheless, cooperatives are widely accepted as one of the development techniques worldwide (Vieta & Lionais, 2015).

Unemployment, poverty, and inequality are some of the difficulties South Africa still faces (Chantiandiara, 2019). Statistics South Africa (StatsSA, 2011) data shows that unemployment is most prevalent among women and youth. It is also more widespread in rural areas. As a result, the government included job creation and community development in the National Development Plan 2030. Job creation, poverty reduction, income growth and reducing inequality are all top priorities of the 2030 National Development Plan (NDP). In his 2019 State of the Union Address, President Cyril Ramaphosa set a number of objectives, including advancing inclusive economic development and job creation.

The Limpopo Development Plan (LPD, 2019) 2015-2019 strategy to reduce poverty and food insecurity derives from the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030. Lepelle-Nkumpi is situated in the southernmost region of the Capricorn District in the South African province of Limpopo. There are roughly 233925 inhabitants living in the primarily rural municipality. In accordance with the Lepelle-Nkumpi Traditional Authorities IDP (2018/19), the Lepelle-Nkumpi Municipality is organised into 30 wards and 94 communities. The municipality has registered 270 cooperatives for job creation and sustainable livelihood Lepelle-Nkumpi IDP (2018/19).

However, there is no evidence that these cooperatives have a positive impact on the livelihoods of the beneficiaries, especially in rural areas. This dearth of evidence warrants that an assessment of how cooperatives contribute to job creation and sustainable livelihoods in low-income settings. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to determine whether the chosen cooperatives in the nearby municipality of Lepelle-Nkumpi can aid communities in enhancing and sustaining their standard of living through generating employment.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Throughout the 20th century, cooperatives in South Africa gained popularity (SEDA, 2007; Altman, 2009). Both the 1908 Co-operative Act and the 1922 Co-operative Societies Act were directed at agricultural businesses (Ortman & King, 2007). The recognition of trading cooperatives was made possible by the passage of the 1981 Law on Cooperatives No. 91. The law is said to have been amended at least eight times (Ortman & King, 2007). According to SEDA (2007), the definition of cooperatives in the Cooperatives Act of 1981 was inadequate and that cooperatives were not required to follow cooperative principles (Kanyane & Ilorah, 2015). As a result, many cooperatives failed to adhere to international cooperative goals and this resulted in many of them not effectively following international principles (Thaba & Mbohwa, 2015). The trend of default was often mediated and anchored in the schema of racial discrimination and social injustice as a form of trade (Mushonga, Arun & Marwa, 2019).

Cooperatives were mainly engaged in agriculture and formed to help farmers financially (Kanyane & Ilorah, 2015). The planning and governance of society and the economy during apartheid are intertwined with the history of cooperatives in

South Africa (Mushonga, Arun & Marwa, 2019). Khumalo (2014) states that various racist governments in South Africa stole the notion of cooperative to fund and develop organisations geared to the interests of rural Africans, particularly for agricultural purposes, with the Registrar of Cooperatives as the implementing agency. During the apartheid era, white farmer cooperatives were important tools for agricultural commercialisation and effective rural development (Satgar & Williams, 2013). These cooperatives had evolved into effective corporations in control of agricultural production, marketing, and processing (Khumalo, 2014).

Cooperative disasters in South Africa's former homelands, according to Rena (2017) were mostly brought on by a lack of administrative expertise and understanding, a lack of capital resources, and members' disloyalty to ignorance. The apartheid political environment in which agricultural cooperatives operated somewhat tainted their acceptance as a South African success story, although they undoubtedly demonstrated South Africa's commercial potential (Ramutsindela, 2012). A defining characteristic of South African cooperatives was the cohabitation of a powerful white-owned cooperative movement and a weak black-owned cooperative movement (Department of Trade and Industry, 2004). The democratic government has established very strong institutional mechanisms to promote cooperatives. Particularly, South Africa's cooperative growth is driven by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

Institutions like NAMAC/Ntsika can use their diagnostic resources to develop the cooperative industry. Consequently, development cooperatives are a key type of cooperative that deserves special attention in cooperative policy and strategy when needed (DTI, 2004). The National Development Agency (NDA) collaborated with South African Social Security and formed other influential and strategic alliances like the South African Local Government Association to secure the viability of cooperatives (SALGA), Southern African Council of Bishops Conference (SACBC), the Network Action Group (NAG) and traditional leaders to reduce poverty in communities (Indaba News June, 2018).

Through institutional capacity building and technical training, the NDA with Civil Society Organisations are responsible for facilitating the development of youth organisations into formal entities. They also award grants with the aim of improving

their capacity for markets and other services. The cooperatives, along with the local municipality, approached NDA for support in strengthening the projects. NDA's budget was R50 million as a national target. The Savings and Credit Co-Operative Society (SACCOS) provide financial services that are limited in many communities in both rural and urban areas (Kyazze, Nkote, Isingoma & Ntim, 2017). According to Muswema, Strydom, Mamafa and Mapako (2015), despite the low eligibility requirements and the large benefits associated with diverting waste from land hills, cooperatives often remain weak and vulnerable.

1.3. STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The unemployment rate in the municipality of Lepelle-Nkumpi is 48%. According to the LNM IDP for 2018–19, this unemployment rate is higher than the unemployment rates in the Capricorn district, the province, and the country. According to IDP data (IDP, 2018/19:20), Lepelle-Nkumpi Municipality has a total of 61,305 households with an average household size of 3.8. The municipality has a high poverty rate, with over 15% of households living under poverty index. The 2018/19 IDP reports state that 82,828 people in Lepelle-Nkumpi Municipality are dependent on social grants paid monthly by the (SASSA) Social Security Agency (LNM IDP, 2018/19).

The municipality has registered 270 cooperatives for job creation and sustainable livelihoods (IDP, 2018/19). The cooperatives that exist within the municipality are tourism, agriculture, livestock, hospitality, and bakery. The majority of cooperatives are initiated by the managers and the community itself. While some cooperatives receive funding only from the private sector, others are supported by the Departments of Agriculture, Social Development, and Rural Development. However, there is no evidence of how these cooperatives have impacted the livelihoods of beneficiaries. In particular, there is limited empirical evidence demonstrating the sustainability of the impact the cooperative has in improving the livelihoods of beneficiaries. Given the lack of this evidence, understanding cooperatives impact accurately amid the municipality's high rates of unemployment and poverty remains a challenge.

The study investigated how cooperatives contribute to the development of sustainable livelihoods and employment. The researcher also looked at how the cooperatives, when they were put in place, contributed to raising community living

standards in the neighbourhood municipality. The literature has emphasized the significance of cooperatives' role in society at large (Satgar & Williams, 2013; Khumalo, 2014; Chantindiara, 2019; Czachorska-Jones, 2019). But there hasn't been anything written about how cooperatives promote local income streams that lead to employment creation in the Lepelle-Nkumpi Municipality. The primary research question of this study was "What role do cooperatives play in generating employment and sustainable living in the local municipality?"

1.4 GOAL OF THE STUDY

1.4.1 Goals of the research

A research study is a systematic, knowledge-generating investigation conducted to achieve a specific goal. According to DePoy and Gitlin (2016), the research goal expresses the researcher's intention to begin the research study. Thus, the research goal clearly describes what the researcher hopes to achieve by carrying out the research investigation (Nestor & Schutt, 2015).

The primary objective of this research was to examine how cooperatives contribute to the development of sustainable livelihoods and employment in the Lepelle-Nkumpi Municipality in Limpopo Province. The study focuses on job creation and sustainable livelihoods stems from an acknowledgment of the challenges to the researcher described in the statement of the research problem. These challenges include high unemployment and poverty despite the existence of cooperatives, which purportedly aim to create jobs and alleviate poverty.

1.4.2 Study objectives

The goals of the research study are briefly stated in the research objectives (Dawson, 2016). Despite being derived from the research goal, research objectives are specific in nature and are developed taking into account the timeframe and resources available to fulfil them (Chaudhuri, 2021). According to Adams, Khan, and Raeside (2014), research goals must be developed in a way that is precise, quantitative, doable, practical, and time-bound. Therefore, it is not necessary for research aims to be excessively wide to prevent rapid implementation (Pruzan, 2016).

The study was based on these main objectives:

- Investigate the functions and nature of various cooperatives to determine their relevance and purpose in raising the standard of living of the communities in the Lepelle-Nkumpi Municipality area.
- Assess the contribution of cooperatives to job creation and sustainable livelihoods and whether they could generate profits that could then be sustained for future generations.
- Identifying strategies that can improve the contribution of cooperatives to job creation and sustainable livelihoods through effective partnerships, market presence and access, on-going capacity building and empowerment.

1.5 STUDY QUESTIONS

Research questions are closely linked to and derived from research objectives (O'Leary, 2018). According to White (2017), research questions should be clearly formulated to succinctly state what the researcher intends to study. In other words, well-formulated research questions indicate the type of responses the researcher would like to receive from participants in order to accurately answer the main research question (McGregor, 2018). The research questions that guided this study are as follows:

- What are the functions and nature of the various cooperatives that determine their importance and purpose in raising the standard of living of the communities in Lepelle-Nkumpi Municipality?
- How do cooperatives contribute to the creation of jobs and sustainable livelihoods and are the profits made sustainable for future generations?
- What strategies could be implemented to improve the contribution of cooperatives to job creation through effective partnerships, market presence and access, and on-going capacity building and empowerment?

1.6 MOTIVATION/RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

De Vos (2011) claims that study questions and challenges in qualitative research are often derived from real-world observations, dilemmas, and investigations. Professional observations that backed up the prior claim inspired the researcher to conduct this investigation. In actuality, the researcher has approximately 12 years of experience with the Limpopo Province Department of Social Development. During this tenure, a close working relationship was established with the collaboration in the Lepelle-Nkumpi community. Throughout the period of interaction with the cooperative representatives, the researcher noted that cooperatives play a role in job creation. However, the researcher was interested in performing this study because it was unknown how much the cooperatives contribute to sustainable lives and the generation of jobs. In addition, the researcher observed that youth and community members in Lepelle-Nkumpi municipality have high rates of unemployment and poverty, despite the abundance of cooperatives in the neighbourhood. Therefore, the motive was to investigate the role of cooperatives in creating employment and a sustainable livelihood in Lepelle-Nkumpi Municipality, Limpopo Province.

1.7 THEORETICAL AND OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF CONCEPTS

In a research study, concepts denote abstractions of the phenomena that the researcher wishes to study (Grove, Gray & Burns, 2015). According to Braum and Clarke (2013), concepts are constructs or mental representations of a particular phenomenon. Therefore, the researcher is expected to provide operational (constructed) definitions of the concepts that represent the phenomena being studied, in order to clearly indicate how and what is being studied is valued (Yin, 2011). With this in mind, the terms cooperatives, sustainability, employment (livelihood), community and growth are defined below:

1.7.1 Cooperatives

Cooperatives ensure the social and economic survival of many communities, particularly those suffering from rural decline (Couchman & Fulton, 2015). According to SEDA (2007), a cooperative is a democracy-based enterprise in which members take collective ownership and each member participates in the decision-making that governs the business. Cooperatives in this study refer to organisations or community projects that initiate sustainable socio-economic development ideas for job creation to transform living standards within communities. It means the organisations

established to reduce unemployment to bring about socio-economic change within local communities.

1.7.2 Sustainability

Closs, Speier and Meacham (2011) as whether something continues to work overtime or not. Some defined sustainability as the continuation of the programme as a whole, while others associated it with specific programme components (DeMiglio & Williams, 2013). According to Closs, Speier and Meacham (2011), sustainability is represented by a community's ability to deal with change and adapt to new situations. This study adopts the definition of Closs, Speier and Meacham (2011) which indicates that the cooperatives studied have the ability to cope with change and embrace new situations.

1.7.3 Employment (Livelihood)

A livelihood consists of assets, activities, and access to them (mediated through institutions and social interactions), all of which contribute to an individual's or household's standard of living (Serrat, 2017). Livelihood in the study refers to an improved standard of living that is efficient and effective for an independent person or community, such as better income, better jobs, claimed purchases and investments.

1.7.4 Community

A sense of belonging, importance to one another and the group, and a common conviction that their needs would be addressed as a result of their adherence to being together are all characteristics of a community (Goel, 2014). According to van Westoby (2014), the term "community" refers to an ethnic or cultural group, a linguistic community, or a collection of people who have something in common. The term community is defined here as a collection of people who share certain characteristics. The community can be loose or tight knit depending on the environment they live in. When a community is closely related, it is said to be closely related to people who have a strong bond. Furthermore, if members do not have strong bonds, the community can be loose (Goel, 2014). The above definition of community was used in the research study.

1.7.5 Growth

According to Ginting (2020), development is a complex problem with many different and sometimes conflicting components with conflicting meanings. There is no universal or unique answer because progress depends on ideals and different perceptions of the good life. Mensah and Casadevall (2019) agree that ascension is contentious, difficult, and ambiguous, and progress is a good change. According to Asafu-Adjaye & Mahadevan (2012), the World Development Report emphasises the multidimensional aspect of development. They see it as a process that includes fundamental changes in social structures, popular attitudes and national institutions, as well as increased economic growth, reduced inequality and poverty eradication.

Sen (1999) introduces as development as freedom. Sen (1999) asserts that growth is more than just material change; it must also include changes that give people more freedom. These freedoms are divided into five categories; political freedom, economic and social opportunities, clarity and security. This study uses Sen's definition of development because it addresses complex developmental difficulties. There is no single development. However, they are useful in that they each locate and underline critical components of growth. Combining these many views was the method adopted in this investigation. Development is thus described as good social, economic, political, and cultural growth that increases human agency and helps them reach their full potential in every sphere of life. It is a complicated, multifaceted occurrence. This idea of progress influenced the investigation's analytical framework.

1.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Human subjects should be protected from harm and have their rights respected at all times when participating in research (Arifin, 2018). Respecting participants' rights by taking precautions to protect them and prevent rights abuses is a fundamental tenet of ethical research (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018). The researcher followed a number of ethical principles in this study that were focused on safeguarding and preserving the participants' well-being. These ethical requirements or principles included the need for informed and voluntary involvement, the freedom to leave the study at any

time and without explanation, anonymity and secrecy, the competence of the researcher, the safety of the participants, and equitable participant recruitment. These ethical guidelines, as well as how they were utilized in this study, were described below by the researcher.

1.8.1 Permission to conduct the study

A request for research ethics clearance has been filed with and received from the Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC). This committee is tasked with promoting good ethical behaviour among student researchers at the University of Limpopo. Their mission is to ensure that student researchers adhere to standards of ethical practice when researching human subjects (Rachuene, 2018). In the same vein, the researcher also requested permission to carry out the research project from the Local Lepelle-Nkumpi Municipality and the tribal/traditional councils in which the studied organisations are based.

1.8.2 Consent with knowledge

The researcher provided the volunteers with information on the study's goals, aims, and potential advantages as well as hazards they might encounter. By making this effort, the participants were able to decide for themselves whether or not to take part in the study (Klykken, 2021). Each participant was specifically informed of the research project's purpose and invited to participate voluntarily (Mayne & Howitt, 2022). Before the actual empirical investigation began, informed permission forms were given out. They were given out as a written confirmation of the participants' consent to participate in the study. The forms were signed by the participants once they gave their consent. No one was coerced into participating, and not participating was not punished. Participants were not offered any financial incentives to obtain their consent (Manti & Licari, 2018). Initials, signatures, and dates had to be written on the consent papers by participants who gave their permission to participate.

1.8.3 Sincerity and respect

A research study must be conducted with careful precision that does not cause physical and emotional distress to participants or cause other forms of harm (Vries & Munung, 2019). In accordance with this ethical consideration, no participant was subjected to any form of harm or abuse. Participants' views and opinions on the

topics studied were respected. Furthermore, no information about their responses or identifying data was published, disclosed, or shared with any other person or institution without their written consent (Pepper, Pope, Kling, Alessandrini, van Staden & Green, 2018). In order not to deceive the participants, no information relevant to the participants' decision to decline or withdraw from the study was withheld (Eaton, 2020).

All relevant information for the purpose of the research project was communicated to the participants orally with further written information. This is important as deceiving participants often take the form of intentionally misrepresenting facts or withholding relevant information to entice participants to participate in the study (Resnik, 2018). The researcher informed the participants that the interviews were part of a larger study of their master's degree, with the conclusions being used for educational purposes. Publishing the material would not reveal names. The researcher treated all participants with dignity and respect throughout the research process.

1.8.4 Anonymity and confidentiality

The assurance of anonymity and confidentiality pertaining to participants' identities and responses is significant to fostering the trustworthiness of a research inquiry (Resnik, 2018). However, such an ethical consideration is imperative when conducting an inquiry into a research topic that carries with it substantial sensitivity where disclosure of such participants' information may jeopardise their welfare and compromise the inquiry's credibility (Eaton, 2020). The identities of the participants were not released. In this regard, no individual with the exception of the researcher and research supervisor had unrestricted access to the raw data and other pertinent records obtained for the sole purpose of this study (Tyler, 2020). All research records, both print and electronic, were secured and safely kept in a locked steel cabinet at the researcher's workplace. Upon completion of the study, the research records will be destroyed.

1.8.5 Dissemination of study findings

The researcher was aware of the obligation to disseminate research results, whether negative or positive, in a timely, ethical and competent manner (Whitehead, Ferguson, Lo-Biondo-Wood & Haber, 2020). In other words, the researcher had an

obligation to ensure that the research results were made available to the public, but not prematurely or unreasonably delayed (Marin-Gonzalez, Malmusi, Camprubi & Borrell, 2016). In this research project, the results are disseminated via suitable communication formats such as discussion forums for citizens on topics that concern them in the municipality and in accredited journals. In addition, the summary of the results will be made available to the participating organisations and their stakeholders. The mini-dissertation will also be downloaded to the University of Limpopo Research Archive for wider access via internet-connected devices.

1.9 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

According to De Vos (2014:107), the significance of a research investigation relates to the importance or contribution of the study. A research study should contribute to the generation of knowledge; inform practice, policy, and problem-solving, and impact the knowledge base of a particular field of study in which they are conducted (Adu & Baduri, 2022; Denicolo & Becker, 2012).

The results of this study will contribute to a better understanding of the role of cooperatives in job creation and to raising awareness of the characteristics that affect their sustainability. The local municipality, cooperatives and government agencies would have new insights to develop and implement strategies, review their policies and plans to oversee, monitor and coordinate the cooperatives in their area. Furthermore, the study uncovered the gaps found in cooperatives that create barriers to job creation. The study would help strengthen the mandate of cooperatives in creating jobs for a better sustainable livelihood. It had also identified the challenges that cooperatives are experiencing and information that would be helpful to the community in its efforts to improve the functionality and performance of cooperatives.

1.10 STUDY LIMITATIONS

Potential flaws in research studies that are out of the researchers' control are examples of research study limitations (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). According to Olofowote (2017), the time and financial limits the researcher must work within as well as the research design they select are frequently directly related to the limitations of the study. In other words, restrictions are imposed that the researchers did not design (Akanle, Ademuson & Shittu, 2020). This study's main objective was

to investigate how cooperatives in Lepelle-Nkumpi Municipality, Limpopo Province, contribute to the development of sustainable livelihoods and employment. The researcher concentrated on two facets of the function of cooperatives, namely the development of jobs and stable means of subsistence. The investigation's primary target is the nearby municipality of Lepelle-Nkumpi.

The study also concentrated on the four clusters of the municipality's functional cooperatives. The inference is that co-ops outside of the chosen local municipality and that were not operational were rejected by the researcher. The researcher's goal was to get a greater understanding of how the cooperatives operate in the research location chosen, not to generalize the study results to other contexts (Carminati, 2018). However, enough details about the investigated cooperatives' features were provided to guarantee the applicability of the findings (Ormston, Spencer, Barnard & Snape, 2014).

1.11 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

The study's backdrop was presented, beginning with a description of the importance of cooperatives in global development and it converted to a significant approach in South Africa for economic progress. The discussion of a research problem, purposes, and important study inquiries that directed the investigation were defined. Justification for performing task was stated, as well as a brief explanation of its relevance. An essential part of the study is the explanation of the key terminologies utilised in the report, which were also defined.

1.12 STRUCTURE/OUTLINE OF THE MINI-DISSERTATION

There are five chapters in this mini dissertation. In accordance with the Postgraduate Manual (2021) for the University of Limpopo applicable to the writing of the research reports including the mini-dissertation, the chapters contained herein are organised as follows:

Chapter One (Orientation of the study)

The study is placed in context in this chapter. The characteristics of cooperatives for global development were described. It went on to describe in more detail how cooperative implementation has developed into a crucial strategy for socioeconomic development in South Africa. This chapter provides an overview of the developed

research aim, aims, and research questions that served as the basis for this study's implementation. Importantly, the study's significance, its restrictions, and definitions of essential concepts are all included.

Chapter Two (Literature review)

The chapter's objective was to summarise and review the results of pertinent investigations that had already been done on the topic under investigation. The researcher addressed the theoretical framework that placed the study within the context of broader theoretical understanding of the function of cooperatives in generating employment and sustainable livelihoods in this chapter. The researcher also synthesised points made by other scholars on the subject of cooperatives' roles in development generally before examining their effects on community livelihoods in particular. The chapter covers the findings of several studies with an emphasis on research done in South Africa utilising a range of academic sources. The analysis of the literature revealed knowledge gaps that the researcher used to place the current study within the set study goals.

Chapter Three (Research methodology)

The research methods and design were both covered in detail in chapter three of the study. The demographic description, sampling procedures, study methodology, paradigmatic viewpoints, and ways to assure rigor were all covered. The researcher specifically describes and defends the research methodologies and designs applied in the study. It talks about the qualitative, exploratory research strategy used and the justification behind it. It also outlines the methodologies used to conduct the feasibility study, techniques for gathering and analysing data, and strategies for addressing the rigor necessary to ensure the validity of the study's methodology and results.

Chapter Four (Analysis and presentation of study findings)

The data on the topic under research were thematically analysed and interpreted in chapter four. This chapter presents the themes that arose from the data after it had been analysed and understood through debate and narrative. The researcher more specifically provides and examines the findings in light of the study goals and research questions covered in Chapter 1 of this research report.

Chapter Five (Summary, conclusion, and recommendations)

The key findings, conclusions, and recommendations in relation to the study's core goal were summarised in chapter five. The insights that were discovered after the research data were analysed and evaluated as detailed in chapter four were used to create the summary of the main findings. Based on the study objectives and the researcher's conclusions drawn from these key findings, this chapter offers suggestions and directions for further research on the contribution of cooperatives to job creation and sustainable lives.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

A review of the literature on the topic under consideration is presented in this chapter. This chapter's goal is to review the research on the contribution that cooperatives make to the development of stable employment and means of subsistence. According to Heyvaert, Hannes, and Ongehena (2017), a literature review is an analysis that is critical of the research that has already been done on a certain subject. Galvan and Galvan (2017) state that the goal of the literature review is to synthesize material pertinent to the subject being studied and to assist situate the study within the larger body of existing knowledge. Thus, literature research and synthesis is more than a condensed overview of studies that have been carried out on the research topic (Ridley, 2012). The Lepelle-Nkumpi municipality's cooperatives will be critically analysed throughout the discussions in order to build the structures for shared understanding on the importance of employment development for the future security of the nation. In order to ground this study in the larger body of existing information, a review of the literature was conducted to identify gaps in how the health and wellness support needs of students in public schools are being handled. Therefore, the researcher reviewed primary and secondary literature sources. These printed and electronic literature sources come from academic databases including SAepublications, Sabinet, EBSCOhost, Science Direct, and Google Scholar.

The following is a summary of the chapter: Lepelle-Nkumpi Community and Support for Cooperatives, Introduction, Development and Role of the Cooperative Sector in South Africa, Theoretical Foundation: Cooperatives, sustainable livelihoods and job creation, issues raised by the literature, and a conclusion.

2.2 EVOLUTION AND COOPERATIVES' ROLE IN SOUTH AFRICA

2.2.1 Evolution of cooperatives globally

The cooperatives were established long before the Fair-Trade Movement was established. The rationale for their establishment was to protect and improve the living conditions of workers. The cooperatives were deemed organisations of people with the same goals and interest in changing their standard of living (Wilhoit, 2005). In 1852, when consumer and labour rights were still in their infancy, 28 weavers founded the first cooperatives in Rochdale, England. Rochdale pioneered the four critical principles deemed necessary for membership in the International Co-operative Alliance. Kibbutzim and Mondragon Cooperatives were first established in Israel in 1910. They were the largest movements in the world, representing community-owned workers, consumers, producers, and financial cooperatives. The movements' ability to employ vast numbers of people and adapt to the demands of a constantly changing and expanding economic market is what makes them effective (Altman, 2009). This shows how co-operatives have been very successful in creating jobs in England, Spain and Israel compared to South Africa.

2.2.2 Cooperatives sector in South Africa

Cooperatives in South Africa began as early as the 19th century. They were seen as the cultural norm for black people to work together. The cooperatives were informal in the form of funeral homes, stokvels, blocks and grocery stores and many others under various names that still exist in communities today. Cooperatives are viewed as engines of economic growth for sustainable lives, according to Thaba and Mbohwa (2015). The cooperatives in South Africa were initiated by the white regime to improve the economic status of white minorities through the apartheid government. They primarily focused on agricultural activities to bolster the white farming community because of history, blacks and other racial groups joined cooperatives as general workers. However, the South African democratic government of 1994 flouted the previous regime's Cooperative Act 1981 and replaced it with the Cooperative Act 2005. The Act was developed with reference to international cooperative principles, and it is fit to compete with the global world.

The government then created programs aimed at people just entering the labour market after 1994. To remedy historical injustices, the Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) program was put into place (Pike, 2018). The government

wanted to give the majority of black people jobs and a stable income. At a press conference on February 6, 2006, Vice President Mlambo-Ncguka unveiled the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative South Africa (ASGISA). The goal of this growth initiative was to support other community-based initiatives to halve poverty and unemployment by 2014 (SABC 2, 2006). With the intention of removing apartheid structures and constructing a democratic, non-racist, and non-sexist future, the Reconstruction and Development Plan's policy framework was adopted in South Africa. By implementing job development initiatives, this policy sought to combat poverty and raise local residents' standards of living. Lesser high-quality jobs have been created since the policy's formulation and implementation as the expanding public works programs have grown more employment-driven.

The Growth, Employment and Redistribution Program (Gear) has proven to be both a failure and a success in various ventures. Gomersall (2018:289) argues that gear did not reduce poverty and inequality in the late 1990s but remains broadly low in our current state. This is continually encouraged by on-going budget cuts for programmes implementing local economic development plans to create more jobs each year. Policies have been inclusive for both government and the private sector to tackle and step up the fight against unemployment, but partnerships have had little impact. Government expectations that private sectors will tackle unemployment tend not to work as job losses remain constant and government departments work with austerity measures. The lower budget allocation to local government tends to limit local government to supporting cooperatives for better living standards.

South Africa and the Department of Trade and Industry are pursuing their community development agenda (DTI). The Integrated Development Program (IDP) fosters local government and community involvement and supports government and ministry measures to lower the unemployment rate. The goal of these initiatives is to support the 2030 National Development Plan. The organization of people through cooperatives is largely the responsibility of the government. By promoting the legal registration of small enterprises, the goal is to address the common economic, social, and cultural needs of communities for local economic growth. Ravinder (2017) argues that cooperative registrations have been registered at a high rate, but their survival statistics are quite worrying. Ravinder (2017) points out that

cooperatives are important to serve as a third force in South Africa and eradicate poverty.

Also, cooperatives have the potential to change the status of the unemployment rate as an alternative power in the business world. In this context, cooperatives are seen both as an economic activity and as a social organization (Ravinder, 2017). In order to build up communities and correct the disparities left over from the apartheid era, the government founded cooperatives in the years following 1994. The goal was to empower blacks in economic development through the various departments. These government departments include Agriculture, Social Development, Local Economic Development (LED), Limpopo Economic Development Agency (LEDA), and others. The cooperatives were expected to create more jobs for a sustainable livelihood. The mission to fight unemployment seems more difficult and a dream of future achievement.

2.3 LEPELLENKUMPI MUNICIPALITY AND SUPPORT FOR COOPERATIVES

Limpopo Province in South Africa faces an unemployment rate of 36.96 percent in 2017, while Lepelle-Nkumpi Municipality faced 45.69 percent in 2017 (IDP DRAFT 2020/21:68). The province shares responsibility with its municipalities for fulfilling the 2030 National Development Plan for Poverty Reduction. The Municipality of Lepelle-Nkumpi had its Local Economic Development (LED) department to support the projects and cooperatives within the societies. The challenge is that funding is not prioritized for local development as expected to ease the mandate of both the projects and the cooperatives. The municipality has supported the establishment of cooperatives in accordance with the Ministry of Trade and Industry since 2004. However, success is limited as the municipality supports cooperatives with the aim of reducing poverty through job creation to improve economic growth in societies.

Twalo (2012) contends that a variety of internal and external factors influence how cooperatives can contribute to the nation's struggles with employment creation and poverty reduction. Among these difficulties is the way cooperatives are organised, perceived and managed in communities. Nevertheless, the goal of the cooperatives to create jobs and a sustainable livelihood is always included in the integrated development plan of the communities, but fewer jobs are created every year. From a marketing perspective, the cooperatives' unfamiliarity with traditional businesses as a

business does not bode well for their future growth. The lack of transparency in cooperatives helps explain why they are not as successful as they could be.

The viability of cooperatives is threatened by their disregard for the ideals of the Cooperatives Act of 2005, a lack of funding, and a lack of training in production and marketing. The level at which the government supports the cooperatives shows that there is a gap in training in market competition and profit generation or participation in investment opportunities. There is insufficient information on the sustainability of cooperative livelihoods. Although cooperatives seem to have existed for years, fewer decent-wage jobs are being created. In addition, the financial dependence on government determines the whole life cycle of cooperatives, which is why funding must be a priority in local government planning. In Lepelle-Nkumpi Municipality, there are various cooperatives for agriculture, animal husbandry, bakery, sewing, mining and tourism. The existence of these cooperatives has little impact on job creation in the community. Lack of funding has seen many co-ops collapse within the community, but passion for the business gives members hope that they will recover.

In order to encourage strong local enterprises that generate both direct and indirect employment for locals, the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) outlines the framework of local economic development (Lepelle-Nkumpi Municipality, Local Economic Strategy, 2013-2018). The Lepelle-Nkumpi Municipality is in charge of collaborating with local communities to identify sustainable solutions that address issues affecting people's needs and quality of life. The community collaborates with the National Youth Development Agency, Department of Industrial Trade, Department of Agriculture, Department of Social Development, and Limpopo Economic Development Agency (LEDA) (NYDA) and other organisations. Despite the municipality's efforts, job losses continue to increase and pose a challenge to people's living standards. The municipality must facilitate local economic development in its strategy to encourage local employment growth, government and private investment. It is unfortunate that the community and its cooperatives have created temporary jobs instead of developing a sustainable, resilient and inclusive local economy. By implementing the increased public works program, which enhances the quality of life for municipality residents compared to cooperatives, the government plays a significant role in lowering unemployment.

2.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: COOPERATIVES, JOB CREATION AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

There are several theories that influence the practice of community development. Some of these relevant theories are discussed in this section and form an integral part of theoretical framework. Theories include the human-centered or empowerment approach and the sustainable livelihood approach.

2.4.1 People-Centered or Empowerment Approach

According to Korten, who was mentioned by De Beer and Swanepoel (2001), people-centered development is a process in which society develops institutional ability to mobilize and manage resources. The goal of resource mobilization and management is to increase individuals' quality of life in a sustainable and equitable manner so that they can pursue their own dreams. Government, non-governmental organizations, and volunteer organisations that support and promote people's roles in development make up the strategy's four main pillars. Additionally, it emphasizes the necessity of sustainable development, community empowerment, and community participation in development. The above components are the driving forces behind improving the livelihoods of communities by empowering people with skills and knowledge. Therefore, for the success of cooperatives within the community, the above components need to be implemented by the relevant stakeholders.

The approach relies on local governance strengths to provide financial support to cooperatives to improve their ability to create quality jobs with decent salaries for a sustainable livelihood. The four components of this approach require funding to implement the skills and knowledge cooperatives have acquired during government-provided training and capacity building. This approach requires people to be drivers of their own development, knowing their needs, values, resources, skills, knowledge and the community environment. Korten (1991) states that the human-centred approach is shaped by individuals perceiving themselves, their community and their development in the way the environment and resources should be nurtured. The people themselves are at the centre of decision-making about how the empowerment, training and networking programmes should be facilitated to sustain

their community. In the case of cooperatives, it takes more business acumen than ownership to generate profits and contribute to local economic development.

Isidiho and Sabran (2016) describe human-centred development as a bottom-up approach because the decisions are driven by individuals or cooperative members themselves to develop strategies that guide their economy. However, it depends on the capacity of community knowledge, learning ability and innovative ability to take the company to another level of profit making and transform people's lives. This implies that cooperatives play a crucial role in ensuring that members, managers and employers acquire skills by developing leadership skills (Ogbeide, 2015). Poli (2021) quoted Sarah Kanabay as noting the importance of raising awareness of a different approach to commerce that is people-centric rather than profit-centric. The study adopted this approach as people drive more than sustainability and earnings growth. The more profit cooperatives generate, the more gross domestic product increases and the greater the opportunities to create employment opportunities to sustain livelihoods in societies.

2.4.2 Sustainable Livelihoods (SLA) Approach

This approach considers the resources available to people to support their way of life (human, natural, economic or financial, social and physical capital). How people live their lives is affected by background (shocks, patterns, and seasonality), policies, institutions, and procedures. When individuals can prosper despite their vulnerability (to shocks, trends, and seasonality) and when policies, institutions, and processes increase livelihood outcomes without having a negative environmental impact, sustainable livelihoods are enhanced (Ferdoushi, Chamhuri & Nori, 2011). The study uses this method because it encompasses complex factors that have led to people's sustainable livelihoods. In order for cooperatives to be sustainable and create jobs, this approach states that the above benefits should be implemented within the cooperatives.

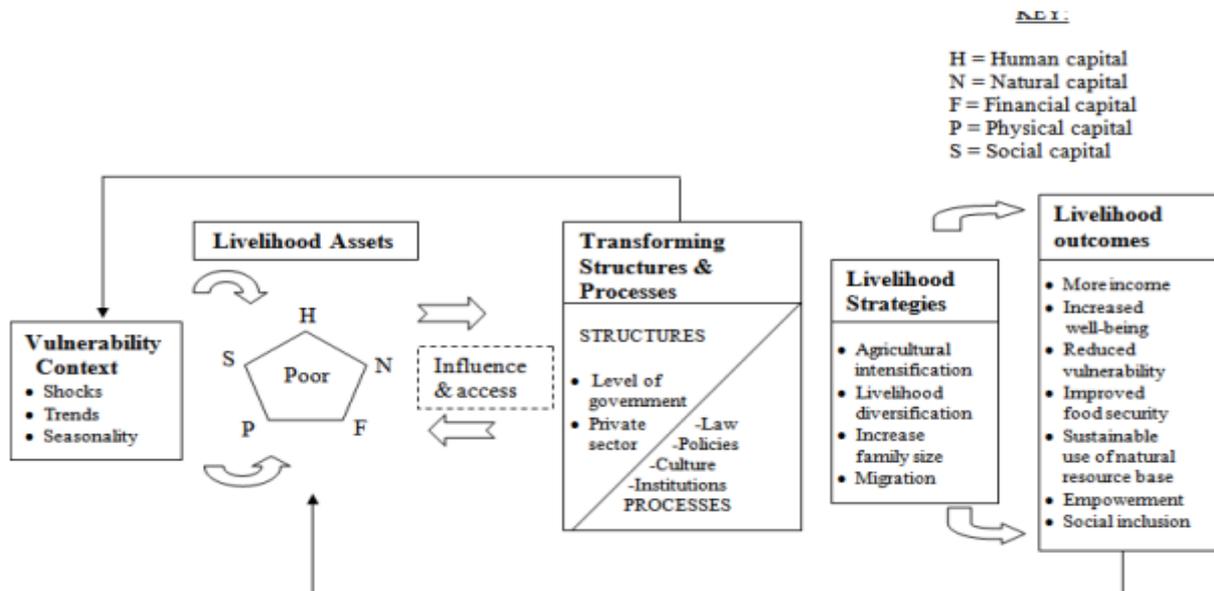


Figure 2.1: Framework for Sustainable livelihoods (Source: Ferdoushi *et al.*, 2011:17)

According to theories about the local milieu (environment), a variety of elements, including work skills, organisational and technological know-how, social and institutional frameworks, affect capital and income. Cooperatives can then pick up the pace and provide sustainable jobs with living wages. This theory's fundamental premise is that there are regional disparities in the composition of the labour force, including those related to costs, numbers, mobility, and other aspects. This allows communities to function in a favourable environment and productivity is guaranteed as happy employees ensure the growth of the company. These labour inequalities can affect a firm's location choice, as investment is attracted to places with favourable conditions for successful production, while it is absent in areas where viable production opportunities have been exhausted. Therefore, in line with this theory, rural development involves a complex web of relationships in which resources are mobilised and in which process management is the result of interaction between local and foreign forces (Leur, 2017).

The study adopts the sustainable livelihood (SLA) and local milieu approach as it encompasses complex factors that result in transforming people's lives. They are supported by an ancient theory of Terluin which states that rural development processes transform community perceptions, attitudes and beliefs through

empowerment for both local and external factors. To help the researcher to assess the impacts related to the various functions offered in the framework, the study used the SLA mentioned above: (Accumulation of Assets, Skills, Empowerment, Employment, Income and Social Capital). The strategy is considered effective for cooperatives to create quality jobs with decent salaries as it encourages local investment, refines endogenous micro and small businesses and attracts other businesses both locally and internationally.

The sustainable livelihoods approach is proving appropriate in local economic development to create direct employment opportunities that affect people's living standards through broad-based local economic development. Furthermore, Adugna (2013) argues that cooperatives can collaborate with other development actors at all levels, either local, national, regional and international, by forming functional cooperation's and partnerships related to ICA principles. Lemke, Yousefi, Eisermann and Bellows (2012) claim that women working in the agricultural sector can become independent, economically viable and sustainable despite many obstacles in the business world. This proves that the sustainable approach can encourage the growth of cooperatives to create more jobs for sustainable livelihoods when integrated with the ICA principles. These principles have been drafted with reference to the 2005 Cooperatives Act. As a result, the researcher may evaluate the impact in terms of the cooperative beneficiaries' capacity to pay for a higher standard of life thanks to this methodology. This includes determining their ability to save, invest, purchase material goods, and send their children to college.

The theories used by the researcher in this study are consistent with the purpose of this study. The relevance of the previously used and explained theories is based on the focus of this study, specifically on the role of cooperatives. More specifically, the researcher wanted to determine what impact they had on people in terms of job creation, poverty reduction and in sustaining their livelihoods.

2.5 ANALYSIS OF STUDIES RELATING TO THE IMPACT OF COOPERATIVES IN DEVELOPMENT

Many communities, especially smaller ones, affected by rural degradation rely on cooperatives to secure their future social and economic existence (Risal, 2021). The cooperatives are expected to create more jobs at the local level in order to generate

economic growth in the communities. The employment generated in the communities will boost the local economy and provide livelihoods. Muthuma (2012) identifies three key phrases that have guided the development of cooperatives for four decades. Mhembe and Dube (2017) assert that the establishment of cooperatives in rural regions has raised the standard of living for residents and decreased poverty by generating jobs, raising food production, empowering the weak, particularly women, and fostering social cohesion and inclusion. Cooperatives are understood on the African continent in terms of their capacity to eradicate poverty and increase employment possibilities. This pertains to the National Development Plan's 2030 employment goals.. The cooperatives as a vehicle for employment opportunities, more comprehensive measures need to be taken to keep them comprehensive (Mhembe & Dube, 2017). However, the addition of business intelligence, vision for investments, marketing strategies for independence, working with successful co-ops, and consistently following government officials' recommendations during oversight can increase members' confidence in co-ops. According to Schwettman (2014), sustainable development requires well-run government, a robust and accountable private sector, a meaningful and diverse civil society, a collaborative global partnership, and a thriving social economy. To work toward the Sustainable Development Goals, each of these five elements should provide their unique competitive advantage (SDGs). However, the lack of funding and support for co-ops from local government is causing them to collapse and close their businesses early, further weighing on the unemployment rate.

The cooperative's members will be proud to advance their objectives in their neighbourhood with the help of all pertinent departments. Stakeholders must make sure the cooperatives have a higher survival rate now that government strategy and policy are in place. The ability and capacity of local communities for sustainable development, not that of the government, determines the survival rate of cooperatives (Thaba & Mbohwa, 2015). South Africa is able to establish cooperatives to make sure that the issues of economic development, poverty, and unemployment are resolved.

Cooperatives should focus their efforts on the goals for which they are best suited. Their dual status as associations and corporations, as well as the complementarity of their three roles – economic, social and societal – should be brought to the table as

their strongest comparative advantage (Shava & Hofisi, 2019). The cooperatives face lack of funding or investors to support their growth and sustainability to improve people's living standards. The financial setbacks disrupt the core function of cooperatives, which are quality employment and the provision of decent wages for local economic growth. Yet there is less effort by the local government to rebuild and support the collapsed or closed cooperatives. The community and interested departments do not seem to work together to improve the performance of active cooperatives. Public organizations claim that because technical advancements and productivity benefits are retained inside one organization and delivered to worker-owners in democratic enterprises, cooperatives are preferable to other business models.

According to Moloto (2012), cooperatives secure and create income and employment opportunities for their members. This is a situation which increases poverty and disadvantages other groups in the neighbourhood. Second, participation in cooperative job creation will empower local people to improve their financial situation. In addition, the cooperatives receive financial benefits that promote local economic development and ultimately increase gross domestic product growth. This makes the cooperatives sustainable and creates more jobs and employs many people to support their standard of living. However, evidence of the impact of cooperatives on sustainable income and improved living standards in communities is scarce. Schwettman, Dyer and Moloto's (2018) proposals to encourage co-ops to compete in the business world for better profits are perfectly acceptable, but co-ops remain dependent on government funding rather than making profits, which is why they collapse every year. Researchers then address the issue of sustainability over the lifespan of cooperatives, specifically their ability to create quality jobs.

With the assistance of the local government and the usage of the Limpopo Economic Development Agency (LEDA) office, which is nearby, the cooperatives in the Lepelle-Nkumpi municipality may generate significant profits. Therefore, cooperatives address both commercial and humanitarian needs at the same time. This means they can pursue long-term goals to reach the international world to generate more profit and avoid dependence on government funding because cooperatives are viewed as businesses. The OCDC also found that urbanisation in many regions of the world has created housing problems for low-income families.

Housing cooperatives address this problem by uniting stakeholders to share the workload. Many of the members may not be eligible for bank loans because they are either unemployed or lack collateral, which is why credit unions may focus on this market.

There are a number of systems in place in South Africa to bridge the gap between the formal and unofficial economies, some of which are hampered by unemployment and, to make matters worse, a lack of collateral for loans, while others increase this leverage. A few of the ways to close this gap are cooperatives. This demonstrates that despite efforts to increase cooperative financial stability so that households can earn more money, the government's declared objective is consistently not met. Although the government already has a significant role in the growth of cooperatives, Thaba (2015) contends that the rise in the number of cooperative registrations today is the result of government support for people to establish cooperatives. The government should monitor the collapsed cooperative to either revive it or merge it for better growth and development in the communities. The increase in cooperative registration numbers does not really prove that a sustainable livelihood is being achieved in South Africa as unemployment in the communities is increasing daily.

According to Godfrey, Muswema, Strydom, Mamafa, and Mapako (2017), cooperative registration is the outcome of the government using a top-down strategy to advance its own initiatives or objectives. One can agree with the statement as there is a lack of evidence of cooperatives making profits to reduce unemployment in the societies. A lack of appropriately skilled labour contributes to slow economic growth, which limits employment rates and the sustained growth of industries and the economy. To name a few of the policy instruments available to support the process of creation, there is the National Industrial Policy Framework (NIPF), the Industrial Policy Action Plan (IPAP 2), the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa (AsgiSA), and the Women Empowerment Strategy (WES) (Bvuma & Murnerwick, 2020). These policies do not appear to be helping the government achieve its goal of creating jobs and offering decent salaries for a sustainable livelihood.

According to Khuzwayo (2016), cooperatives require a high degree of trust amongst members due to the nature of collective interest and involvement. Many cooperatives

have failed due to a lack of common purpose, strategy, financial trust and strong social ties. Rhekaza and Anania (2018) argue that democratic decision-making skills remain low within cooperatives because democracy requires expertise in decision-making processes. Democracy is frequently linked to a lack of consensus or ambiguity over the boundaries of decision-making authority. This has made it a controversial and tense situation for cooperatives. Trust is damaged when boards overstep their authority and fail to inform members. Given the difficulty of managing even the simplest democratic process, this is not surprising. It is possible that boards lack corporate governance expertise.

The province's growth and development strategy, which emphasizes utilising possibilities in all facets of the economy for company development, led to the creation of the Limpopo Business Support Agency (LIBSA). The original mandate of this organization was to support companies in the mining, tourism, agriculture, construction and information communications sectors. Additionally, LIBSA collaborates with other partners on a range of projects (Thaba, 2015:5). The agency existence has not changed the percentage of the unemployment rate in either the province or the municipality. They are calling for more programmes from executive departments and local government to review the strategies of the cooperative's livelihood mission.

2.5.1 Integration of the Limpopo Province with other countries

One of the biggest and most recognisable names in business development in all of South Africa, according to scholars like Nel (2005) and Moloto (2012), is the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), which offers a wide range of specialized services like economic empowerment, SME development, industrial development, trade, export and investment, financial support, and legislation and business regulation. According to each of the three pillars of TICAD, the DTI is in charge of the effective completion of a number of development projects and is the most pertinent JICA input for SSC/TrC programs and projects at TICAD V (2013-2017). The first pillar, Robust and Sustainable Economy, also entails the deployment of policy advisors to promote investment in 10 countries and the support for the creation of 10 strategic master plans for comprehensive development (such as the Northern Corridor in Kenya/Uganda, the Nacala Corridor in Mozambique, the West Africa

Growth Ring, Ivory Coast, and Ghana). The development of industrial human resources through the ABE education initiative is carried out under this pillar. However, in the fog of the calculated situation, the people of this community continue to experience poverty and fall victim to the unemployment schemes of the government agencies.

The resilience of African agriculture is being strengthened by Pillar 2 (Inclusive Development and Resilient Society), which is supported by Japan. One of two important projects is the CARD (Coalition for African Rice Development) initiative, which seeks to double rice output in 10 years to 28 million tonnes by 2018. There are also strategies to promote food security through inclusive development techniques amongst governments in addition to lowering disaster risk, particularly for island states (SHEP). JICA has provided development assistance under Pillar 3 (Peace and Stability) in the areas of governance, maritime security, counterterrorism, peace-building, and peace-building to prevent the recurrence and breakout of conflicts. (JICA, 2014b). This second pillar should be the most effective strategy in agriculture as it has the potential to hire more workers and reduce unemployment. However, implementation appears to be challenging given that low budget allocation is hampering the growth of the sector itself.

The marketing plan for Limpopo also promotes the use of social media to spark discussion and maintain a condition of constant awareness among citizens not only in Limpopo but across the nation. Print media, television and radio should also be used for this purpose. Additionally, the marketing strategy lays out specific projects in phases that are part of the strategy activation and this plan would need to be aligned with those projects. The investigation carried out in this section aims to clearly establish the status of Polokwane-relevant informal trade policy in South Africa. Understanding the current planning and management paradigm in South Africa is crucial to comprehending the trade policy strategy. The situation of informal trade policy is then reviewed, demonstrating the potential to create one that is appropriate to Polokwane due to the availability of a general framework created by the Small Enterprise and Development Agency (SEDA, 2008). In order to demonstrate that creating and implementing such a strategy in Polokwane is both feasible and desirable, this section concludes by offering a number of examples (Polokwane Economic Growth and Development Plan 2030). Therefore, it is of

paramount importance to localize the policies to work within the communities, taking into account various environmental factors that can delay the process of local economic development.

In order to promote economic growth, the improvement of Africa, and the building of a better world, it is necessary to strengthen international partnerships. In order to succeed in this endeavour, NEPAD must be implemented, regional integration of the SADC must be encouraged, South-South connections must be strengthened, and relationships with the North must be based on development and investment. Cooperatives appear to perform better when they have a large network of support, including technical, managerial, legal, administrative, and financial resources. The absence of engagement between cooperatives and non-cooperative businesses, whether as trading partners or to get financial support or other services, as well as the movement's underdeveloped state, all work against the success of cooperatives. The restricted cooperative value chains that can link cooperatives operating in several sectors or various value chains within each sector are an additional factor. Rena (2017) found that the majority of cooperatives (56%) operate in isolation and do not cooperate with other cooperatives. This requires partnerships within the cooperatives themselves to join the International Cooperative Alliance to explore business strategies that will improve their market base for high profits in the future.

2.5.2 Cooperative access to Market and technology

Due to limited access to markets for the products and services they offer (as a result of business peers' lack of understanding and respect of cooperatives as trading partners), many cooperatives have collapsed (Moodi, Askaripoor and Shahraki, 2016). All firms, according to Phillips and Wade (2008), are becoming more and more reliant on their investment in technology and their capacity to keep up with it. The development of new SMEs depends on technology. Technology assists in both creating a multifaceted strategy and maximising commercial opportunities. Information technology appears to be crucial for increasing sales. There is a significant need for the cooperatives to expose themselves to information technology to analyse the market base and predict the future opportunities.

The use of technology has its price. Computer hardware and software must be purchased and installed. It might be challenging for new SMEs without access to

financing to purchase the technology they require. According to Smallbone *et al.* (2003), production costs can affect how fast new SMEs grow. Rising input costs in South Africa, particularly electricity and oil costs, may hamper growth. The role of Limpopo Economic Development (LEDA) is to promote cooperatives within the community and across the province for development, support, trade and investment to create more job opportunities in society. In order to eliminate waste and identify the most effective manufacturing methods, it is crucial to analyse production costs closely.

Alleviating wealth poverty is another important step towards a viable and sustainable system of economic growth and development in Polokwane. Two forms of these programmes to alleviate wealth poverty are already underway and will be further developed, namely land ownership programmes and housing provision. Investors' own capital is often included in cooperative capital and property systems (Mpandeli & Maponya, 2014). More research on behavioural, organisational, and strategic concerns is required, according to academics like Power, Heaven, McDermott, and Daly (2018), in order to fully comprehend how technology affects organisations. The cooperatives' ability to plan and make decisions will improve thanks to the shifting information about technology, which will help them achieve their objectives of lowering unemployment and raising living standards in society.

2.5.3 Ownership cooperative

The cooperative can finally incorporate the ownership of the investors by becoming a joint stock company or limited liability business. It is important for the cooperatives in the municipality of Lepelle-Nkumpi to develop a sense of ownership of their business. The special attention is realised when the members of the co-ops internalize the goals and purposes of the company, which can lead them to buy shares in the stock market. The sense of ownership will create trust and performance within the cooperatives. This will also increase the level of respect during planning and decision making in order to achieve high sustainability gains. Important lessons can be learned regarding the viability of the cooperative form of enterprise. This ownership structure makes sense. The pursuit of owner interests is the guiding premise for any company. In the case of a listed company, this is shareholder value; in the classic cooperative it is utility. Except for consumer

cooperatives, all cooperative members are equally interested in starting their own businesses (MacIntyre, 2019). They create and put into action a thorough rural development strategy with the intention of enhancing both food security and quality of life. Risks to the provincial economy are posed by sustainable resource management and exploitation, climate change, biodiversity loss, and diminishing water resources. Energy efficiency is being increased, while the energy mix is being diversified (with more renewable energy sources). Implementing a zero tolerance policy toward unlawful and unsustainable resource exploitation, assisting regional sustainable food production, and promoting sustainable water usage while safeguarding water quality, will be the responsibility of all organizations and individuals (The Department of Trade & Industry, 2012-2022).

According to research by Francesconi, Wouterse, and Namuyigas (2021), cooperatives lack resilience due to organisational immaturity, massive membership, elite conquest, and a lack of business acumen resulting from a general lack of managerial capital. They also suggested that the COVID-19 situation is likely to have a long-term effect on the world economy and that African agricultural households run the risk of being increasingly cut off from food value chains and associated economic opportunities. The cooperatives should own the business and not depend on the government for funding, but receive support in empowerment and training programmes that help them network with other cooperatives for better growth and development. In this way, cooperatives become independent entities that could turn into large companies that create jobs for sustainable development.

2.6 EMERGING ISSUES FROM LITERATURE

Cooperatives have not performed well in attracting investment, job creation, innovation and collaboration compared to other economic sectors. Given the aforementioned academic studies, it is clear that cooperatives' limited lifespan in the commercial sector is actually caused by a lack of effective planning and support on their part. Stakeholders in the country should worry that the strong government drive to register cooperatives could lead to further failures in sustaining these types of businesses in hopes of reducing unemployment or even improving people's living standards.

The National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) was founded in 2009 in accordance with the NYDA Act 54 of 2008 with the intention of fostering youth development in South Africa. Youth unemployment is increasing in communities despite existing measures, pushing the government to offer more social services. The NYDA takes the initiative to make sure that government organizations collaborate to create projects and programs that enhance the lives of young people. Unquestionably, Polokwane will be impacted by the Limpopo Economic Development Agency (LEDA), a relatively recent addition to the province's institutional architecture. The organisation was created by the merger of the Limpopo Business Support Agency (LIBSA), Trade and Investment Limpopo (TIL), and Limpopo Economic Development Enterprise (LimDev).

However, the availability of better employment prospects in the neighbourhood was not significantly impacted by the establishment of these agencies. In 2004, the Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA) became the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), thanks to the National Small Business Amendment Act 29 of 2004. The mandate of SEDA includes implementing the government's small business strategy, designing and implementing a uniform, shared national delivery network for small business development, and integrating government-funded small business support organizations at all levels of government (Polokwane 2030 Economic Growth and Development Plan, 2013).

The lack of business analysis and information technology creates a huge gap in the growth and development of cooperatives. IT-skilled experts' assistance to cooperatives could have a significant impact on job growth and business updates on the nation's economic development. The contributions of academics such as Power, Heaven, MacDermott and Daly (2018) on the importance of technology for organisational performance, particularly decision-making, do not seem to be implemented in cooperatives to ensure growth and sustainable livelihoods in communities. In this capitalist economy during the COVID-19 pandemic era, the existence of cooperatives to impact performance in securing job creation as a reliable engine for high employment does not appear realistic. The Coronavirus crisis is channelling all government resources to fighting the disease rather than creating jobs and therefore many co-ops are only sustained by being able to be flexibly included in funding schemes. The COVID-19 pandemic uncertainty triggered the

nation's economic crisis, which caused the government's employment development programs to fail. There is little evidence that cooperatives have the capacity and potential to reduce poverty by creating employment opportunities to support livelihoods. The fact that employment in cooperatives depends on government funding leaves much more to be desired for sustainable local economic development than it is believed by academics. Recommendations from academics on training, skills development, and knowledge and market access are not the whole truth for cooperatives to implement the mandate of creating jobs and improving living standards. Perhaps one can argue whether the cooperative members themselves are fully employed and satisfied with the salaries they receive in their own sector. If the response is positive, the goal of poverty alleviation and decent jobs will be achieved.

Although quite extensive, current literature on the role of cooperatives in livelihoods is limited and for the following reasons:

- a. Evidence on number of jobs created is very limited.
- b. Most of the studies do not go into detail about the nature of the jobs as well as their sustainability over time. Furthermore, the studies do not have clear indicators as to the meaning of sustainability of jobs. This is a serious shortcoming because it is not just about number of jobs created but their quality and duration that also matters in community development.
- c. There was no evidence of comprehensive nation-wide surveys of cooperatives, findings of which can possibly be generalized
- d. There are serious gaps in terms of understanding the municipality as a 'driver' of cooperatives and yet, in the context of South Africa, this local government sphere plays a central role in local development. The literature does not provide extensive analysis of the complexities and dynamics of the municipality as a driver of development. Those complexities and dynamics include the politics of local government, challenges of poor service delivery, corruption and competing priorities given that historically, these entities primarily provided basic services. Despite poor performance of many municipalities with respect to service delivery, they are then expected to drive a local development agenda. A comprehensive unpacking of these

challenges would enable the reader to have a better understanding as to why cooperatives in many parts of South African have not had the desired impact of creating jobs and sustaining livelihoods. It is therefore hoped that this research will make a contribution by addressing some of these knowledge gaps in the literature on cooperatives in the country.

2.7 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

The cooperatives as a vehicle for employment opportunities, more comprehensive measures need to be taken to support them (Mhembe & Dude, 2017). However, the addition of business intelligence, vision for investments, independent marketing strategies, working with successful co-ops, and consistently following government officials' recommendations during oversight can increase members' trust in co-ops. Problems with African development persist even as the cooperative movement expands. This study's goal is to evaluate the challenges of working with cooperatives in Africa as a place to begin building a stronger cooperative movement that will effectively assist development on the continent. Efforts within communities to improve people's livelihoods are in vain, however, as unemployment in the country is soaring. The municipalities remain in a financially vulnerable position due to the existence of less growing cooperatives. The reality that cooperatives face in order to access markets, finance, financial information and property remains a challenge.

The cooperatives receive training because management seems to lack the skills to keep the business and livelihood going. The question is, who owns the cooperatives if they don't create jobs and don't provide a livelihood? Are people working for someone else or are they able to make profits for better economic development? What is the nature and functions of the various cooperatives in the region? The Cooperative Promotion and Awareness Program (CPAP) and the Cooperative Two cross-sectoral support programs called Agency are created to offer co-operative education and training, information, and assistance in creating standards and curriculum for co-operative operational education and training. Additionally, it oversees and assesses the plan, coordinates action research, and monitors (DTI, 2012-2022).

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The researcher describes and justifies the research approach to be employed in this chapter. Given are the characteristics, benefits, and drawbacks of the qualitative research approach used in this study, which is qualitative in nature. The quantitative and mixed methodologies techniques, their unique characteristics, and the justification for their removal from this study are also briefly explained by the researcher. The interpretivist viewpoint was used in this investigation. This study used an exploratory, descriptive, and contextual research design. The researcher

explains the significance of this research strategy in this study in this regard. Participants who satisfy the inclusion criteria, which are fully described, were chosen using the non-probability purposive sampling method. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were used to get the primary study data from the individuals that the researcher was after. It is described how the participants were prepped for the data collection process, as well as the epistemological techniques the researcher employed to demonstrate the accuracy of the research findings.

3.2 PARADIGMATIC PERSPECTIVES

On the world they live in and desire to live in, researchers have a diverse range of viewpoints. These beliefs are called worldviews and influence how researchers study (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). Identifying and selecting an appropriate research paradigm is an integral part of any research request. This is because a research paradigm that a researcher chooses plays a central role in emphasising how a researcher perceives reality and how that reality is to be examined and understood. A research paradigm represents a researcher's worldview (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). In other words, it establishes how a researcher wants to carry out their study investigation, including the research methodologies to be applied and the analysis and interpretation of the data gathered. In actuality, a research paradigm is the framework that a researcher will use to explore a topic they are interested in, as seen from that researcher's point of view of the world (Kamal, 2019). There are four primary paradigms in human science research: positivism, interpretivism (post-positivist), advocacy (participatory), and pragmatism. The researcher chose the constructivist paradigm as the basis for this study.

3.2.1 Constructivism

The constructivist paradigm is concerned with how people's interpretations and meanings of events develop out of their shared assumptions about reality, rather than out of a vacuum. In this sense, constructivism asserts that an individual's experiences, seen through the lens of their interactions with others, as well as the language they use to express those experiences, are fundamental to how that individual interprets reality (Kamal, 2019). In other words, as this paradigm asserts, understanding reality in the context of the collective environment in which humans exist is crucial. This indicates that reality, as defined by the constructivist paradigm,

cannot be confined to a single individual, but must be shaped through interactions with others, particularly in their particular environment (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). Nothing is considered universal reality by researchers following the constructivist paradigm. Consequently, it is crucial for a researcher wishing to gain insights into collective interpretations and meanings of a phenomenon under study to recognise the crucial role that communication plays in their interactions aimed at changing the realities in their world or relating to them to understand their specific circumstances (Kuyini & Kivunja, 2017).

The constructivist paradigm is crucial to this study because the researcher wants to understand how the participants perceive the various cooperatives' positive effects on sustainable lives and job creation in their communities. A researcher must comprehend the participants' opinions on the cooperative role in producing jobs and sustainable means of subsistence in order to accomplish this goal. Furthermore, such insight cannot be gained without examining how participants perceive the nature and role of cooperatives and how well they are implemented in their communities. In order for the researcher to obtain a precise grasp of how participants perceive their experiences, the interpretative perspective is used in this study.

3.2.2 Interpretivism

According to the interpretivist, one must first comprehend the beliefs, motivations, and reasoning that people create in their social environment in order to interpret the meaning of qualitative study data (Matta, 2021). This is due to the fact that there are numerous ways to learn. In other words, interpretivism denies the notion that it is possible to understand a person's world and created meaning through an objectified lens. According to the interpretivist perspective, contact between the researcher and the participants is unavoidable. When a researcher aims to document the sensations and interpretations that people produce as a result of their encounters with some certain phenomena, they should not presume any level of detachment (Lincoln, Lynman & Guba, 2018).

It believes that research findings are value-laden and that the values should be made clear. Thus, the interpretivist approach is acceptable for this study because it emphasizes the significance of context in comprehending participants' experiences

and is consistent with the research methods to be used (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Lyons & Coyle, 2016). The researcher makes the crucial claim that social constructions like shared meanings and consciousness allow for access to study participants' realities as manifested in their experiences of the topic under investigation.

3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A systematic technique that guides research and how it should be conducted is known as research methodology (Igwenagu, 2016). More specifically, research methodology involves a theoretical investigation of methods and concepts related to a field of study (Mohajan, 2018). Typically, it defines and specifies ideas such as the research paradigm, research approach, participant selection, data collection and analysis, and interpretation of research data, ethical considerations, and establishing trustworthiness (Melnikovas, 2018). Three types of research methods are commonly cited in the literature, namely quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods research. These research approaches were and are the dominant research options of researchers. Despite being widely used categories, they have different approaches to conducting research. The way these three research classifications explain the nature of the knowledge, the objective of the research, the kind of data to be collected, the techniques used to analyse the collected data, the generalisability and presentation of the results, etc., makes this distinction clear.

3.3.1 Qualitative research approach

This investigation is qualitative in style. Its primary goal is to obtain dense, non-numerical descriptions of the information that will be gathered from participants on the study's subject (Melnikovas, 2018). This is where a qualitative research strategy excels, since it enables the gathering of descriptions and narratives from a small sample of research participants. Additionally, employing a qualitative study methodology enabled the researcher to comprehend the viewpoints of the participants on the function and character of cooperatives in generating employment and means of subsistence in the local community of Lepelle-Nkumpi.

- **Characteristics of the qualitative research approach**

Instead of focusing on a single objective reality, qualitative research makes the assumption that the world is composed of multiple realities. Therefore, participants need to be questioned about their perceptions of reality in order to comprehend such various realities (Cropley, 2015). Inductive research is more common in qualitative than quantitative methods. This suggests that the researcher makes an effort to comprehend participants' experiences of the phenomenon being examined without having any predetermined preconceptions (Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault, 2016). In other words, through analysing and interpreting research data, the researcher enables participants' interpretations of reality to emerge. Importantly, the qualitative researcher becomes the main research tool by actively participating in the study. Qualitative research is therefore more context-based, as participants are studied in their natural environment (Matta, 2019).

3.3.2 Quantitative research approach

Quantitative methodology makes the supposition that there is just one objectively quantifiable reality in existence (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The requirement to establish correlations between measured variables, to identify processes, and to generate hypotheses prior to the actual inquiry is at the heart of quantitative research. Deductive in nature, it casts the researcher in the position of an unbiased observer (Morgan, 2014). Study subjects are observed in their natural surroundings (Matta, 2019).

3.3.3 Mixed methods research

Both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies have flaws in mixed methods research. This means that none of the research approaches is significantly superior to the other. They all have flaws and limitations (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2018). Qualitative research is believed to have a number of disadvantages, including researcher bias, participant trustworthiness and responses, a lack of representativeness, and the generalisability of results (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018). Quantitative research has also come under fire for failing to account for the deeper meaning and explanation of social phenomena, as well as the production and maintenance of social reality and how the subjects being studied perceive and interpret social reality (Plano-Clark & Ivankova, 2018). Against the background of the limitations and weaknesses anchored in both qualitative and quantitative research,

another research approach emerged, namely mixed-methods research. This research approach combines the strengths of quantitative and qualitative research approaches. Therefore, it is considered appropriate to provide researchers with a broader insight into the research problem for which answers are sought (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2018).

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design explains the foundation of the research project. It alludes to the research study's logical structure (Creswell, 2014). According to Morgan (2014), the study plan is guided and informed by the research design. To put it another way, the research design is essential for assisting the researcher in determining the applicability of the intended research methods, the type of data required to answer the primary research question, and the best ways to collect the necessary data using particular data collection techniques (Levy, 2017). An exploratory, descriptive, and contextual research design is employed for the benefit of this study.

3.4.1 Exploratory design

Exploratory research aims to find the primary meanings established by an event, a phenomenon, and people's experiences (Burns & Grove, 2021). This suggests that exploratory design is crucial for researching a novel subject and learning all there is to know about the phenomenon being examined. The purpose of this study was to examine how cooperatives contribute to the development of livelihoods and employment in the Lepelle-Nkumpi municipality. The researcher obtained insights, meanings, and interpretations relating to the phenomena under examination in the absence of fundamental knowledge about the subject or issue under inquiry (Wilson, 2010). Consequently, it is thought that using an exploratory design is acceptable.

3.4.2 Descriptive design

Descriptive design aims to record and characterize the topic of the researcher's interest in order to present its qualities (Asenahabi, 2019). A researcher can accurately capture the traits of the units of analysis and their circumstances in the phenomena they are studying by employing a descriptive design (Sharma, 2019). The researcher in this study used a descriptive methodology to gather participant

experiences that were used to describe the contribution of cooperatives to job and livelihood creation in the Lepelle-Nkumpi municipality.

3.4.3 Contextual design

In qualitative research, context is crucial. The precise circumstance in which the units of analysis interact and the phenomenon under study occurs is called the context (Rintoul, 2017). In other words, context includes the participants' particular backgrounds, experiences, and frames of reference, as well as the circumstances around them. Therefore, when conducting research, researchers should not overlook the importance of context (Duda, Warburton & Black, 2020). The purpose of this research is to understand how cooperatives help the Lepelle-Nkumpi community build sustainable lives and jobs. Due to the use of contextual design, the researcher was able to record both the participant's experiences and the occurrence of the examined event in a genuine setting.

3.5 POPULATION

A population, according to Guest, Namey, and Mitchell (2013), is a group of identifiable people who have the qualities the researcher needs for them to take part in a study. The complete group of objects that the researcher seeks to examine and from which the findings of research studies are extrapolated is referred to as the study population (Casteel & Bridier, 2021). People, events, or situations whose characteristics the researcher considers relevant to the study objective are referred to as aspects of the population (Sharma, 2017). Although the study population consists of a group of individuals that the researcher is interested in, it can be divided into target populations and accessible populations (Kumar, 2011). The population that can be reached and researched is referred to as the accessible population, and the group that can be sampled is referred to as the target population (Privitera & Ahlgrim-Delzell, 2019). The representatives (managers) and beneficiaries participating in the cooperatives' daily operations made comprised the study's target group. The managers and members of the chosen cooperatives who were available and willing to participate for the study made up the accessible population.

3.6 SAMPLING, SAMPLING TECHNIQUES AND SAMPLING SIZE

The representatives (managers) and beneficiaries participating in the cooperatives' daily operations made comprised the study's target group. The managers and members of the chosen cooperatives who were available and willing to participate for the study made up the accessible population. The concept of sampling is further defined and contextualised to provide clarity on how the researcher applied sampling in this study.

3.6.1 Sampling

Sampling is a method or technique that will be used in this study to systematically choose a suitable subset of people from the predetermined population to act as data sources for analysis in accordance with the study's objectives (Sharma, 2017). Given that it is nearly impossible to include and/or involve every single potential participant given the costs, convenience, and time considerations, a sample defined by Rahi (2017) and Sharma (2017) as a carefully and thoughtfully selected group of people pertinent to the phenomena under investigation and having the potential to produce informatively reliable responses shall be chosen. These responses are necessary to addressing the overarching research question.

Sampling technique

This study used a purposeful non-probability sampling technique. This sampling method offers a crucial goodness of fit in acquiring the needed information pertinent to achieving and addressing the study's objectives. Purposive sampling, according to Yin (2011), is the process of choosing study participants or data sources depending on how rich and pertinent the information they are expected to provide is in connection to the study's objectives. In other words, choosing examples with lots of information for in-depth research is essential to the rationale and effectiveness of purposive sampling. According to Patton (2015), cases that are information-rich are those from which a researcher can learn a lot about issues that are crucial to the investigation's goal.

3.6.2 Sampling size

The researcher decided to sample people who met a particular criterion as defined by the researcher since not all possible participants had an equal probability of being chosen to participate in this study (Sharma, 2017). Selecting a purposive sample

was appropriate for this study because the researcher was interested in receiving detailed accounts of participants' narratives. Despite the fact that there is broad consensus regarding the characteristics of an adequate qualitative sample, Kumar (2014) suggests that the sample size should not be so small as to prevent the collection of trustworthy and accurate data. In this vein, the researcher chose a total of 18 participants for the sample.

For the purpose of this study, nine cooperatives' managers and nine beneficiaries were selected. This process of selecting participants continued until theoretical saturation was reached. Aguinis and Solarino (2019) refer to theoretical saturation as reaching a situation where no additional data is found to allow the development of properties of the category.

3.6.2.1 Inclusion criteria

In order to be included in the actual empirical study, the participants had to meet the following specific criteria:

- The selected participants had to be actively engaged in the cooperatives.
- They had to have more than two years of engagement in cooperatives.
- To take part in the study, the individuals had to voluntarily consent.

3.6.2.2 Exclusion criteria

The following traits were present in the potential volunteers that were excluded from this study because the researcher deemed them ineligible for participation:

- Participants who were deemed to be inactively involved in the functions of the cooperatives
- Those who have less than two years of engagement in the cooperatives functions/operations.
- Study participants who refused to provide active, written informed consent and who were unavailable to provide data

3.7 DATA COLLECTION

In a cyclical and deliberate process known as data gathering, researchers look for research data that is relevant to addressing the major research questions of the study (Olsen, 2012). The type of data required and the most efficient method(s) and technique(s) for collecting the data must be determined before data collection can begin (Zozus, 2017). In a similar vein, the researcher must pick the ideal setting for collecting the research data. While data gathering is concerned with the researcher's plans for collecting the necessary data, it also includes other crucial steps like data collection preparation. The two types of study data that are often of interest to researchers are primary and secondary data. Additionally, a variety of techniques for gathering data are accessible, including surveys, focus groups, interviews, observations, and document reviews or analyses. The data needed and the appropriate data collection method(s) are determined by the research technique the researcher chooses (Olsen, 2012).

For this study, the researcher intended to get first-hand information. Primary research data is information gathered from participants' first-hand accounts of the research issue as described in their narrative descriptions. That is, primary data is information that is integrated in the experiences of the unit of analysis and cannot be retrieved through measurements (Billups, 2021). Importantly, primary data also refers to information that has never been published. In comparison to quantitative data, primary qualitative data is not numerical or statistical. It is textual in nature. Primary qualitative data is gathered in the form of words and sentences, according to Zozus (2017), and this information encapsulates people's attitudes, emotions, and individualized perceptions of the topic the researcher is researching (Canals, 2017). The scholarly literature concurs that research data must be legitimate and reliable, regardless of the type of data a researcher is attempting to collect. In this regard, a researcher must pick a method of data collecting that is suitable for gathering the necessary study data. Importantly, the researcher must be able to gather data that is pertinent, trustworthy, and convincing using the data collection method they have chosen.

3.7.1 Data collection method

Interviews were the method of primary data collection the researcher in this study selected in order to gather the information needed to address the primary research

question. A sort of data gathering procedure called interviews involves the researcher actively engaging participants to ask questions and obtain answers about the topics being covered (Billups, 2021). These interviews can be conducted individually or in groups, and they can be conducted in person or over the phone (Canals, 2017). In addition, three different interview formats structured, semi-structured, and unstructured can be used by researchers to pique participants' interest and collect the necessary study data. In structured interviews, participants are questioned similarly and in the researcher-determined order; there is no possibility for extra inquiry or flexibility. In other words, participants are asked to respond to scripted questions, most of which are closed-ended (Whiting & Pritchard, 2021). An interview guide directs semi-structured interviews. Based on their responses, questions are asked of the participants in a flexible and spontaneous manner. Unstructured interviews are based on observations made by the researchers; no questions are prepared in advance to be asked of the participants (Barrett & Twycross, 2018).

Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were employed by the researcher to get initial and direct information from the participants because this study was qualitative and exploratory in nature. To enable the researcher to collect data that can be both complementary and useful in achieving data saturation related to a situation where there is no new information emerging from the participants, semi-structured face-to-face interviews were chosen and used as the primary method of data collection.

3.7.1.1 Face-to-face semi-structured interview schedule

Face-to-face semi-structured interviews involve direct communication between the researcher and the participants to allow for probing and observation of both verbal and non-verbal cues (Barrett & Twycross, 2018). This kind of interview was chosen in this study because it allowed the researcher to gather in-depth data, analyse participant responses in more detail, and go further into the topics under investigation. Most crucially, semi-structured in-person interviews can yield a wealth of information quickly, are less expensive, and allow for interview flexibility (Whiting & Pritchard, 2021). Semi-structured face-to-face interviews are distinguished by the use of an interview guide created or modified by the researcher.

The interview guide used for this study's aims was created by the researcher; it wasn't modified from one that already existed. A semi-structured interview plan is a written document with a series of predetermined, open-ended questions intended to direct interviews with participants, solicit their responses, and provide them with the chance to defend their responses (Tracy, 2020). Because they can improve the real-world context in which participants perceive and create their meanings in connection to their experiences, the researcher chose semi-structured interviews. Additionally, they permitted the researcher to ask questions for clarification when it was judged necessary during the interviews (Tracy, 2020). The use of semi-structured interviews was crucial in that it demonstrated concern for the participants because they were more likely to see their interactions with the researcher as valuable and effective.

3.7.1.2 Preparations for data gathering

Semi-structured in-person interviews require meticulous planning on the part of the researcher. The researcher must get ready for the practical realities of conducting interviews. The researcher had to choose a suitable location for the interviews, select the time and length of the interviews, and make sure there was working audio recording equipment, among other practical considerations for this study (Canals, 2017). The researcher had to make sure that the written informed consent forms and information sheets were distributed to the participants for reading and signing. In this regard, the researcher conducted two visits to the research locations with the intention of informing the participants about the nature and purposes of the study and requesting their consent to participate (Creswell, 2014). The participants' questions concerning the study's objective were satisfactorily addressed. The advantages and dangers of participation in the study were discussed to the participants as part of gaining their active, signed informed consent. Therefore, all of the volunteers who were purposefully chosen had to voluntarily consent to participate in the study and sign the consent form. Data collection was the goal of the second visit to the research sites.

3.7.1.3 Research questions included in the interview guide

- The research questions formulated by the researcher and to be included in the interview guide to inform the collection of relevant research data critical to answering the main research question are as follows:
- Please let me know your role and assigned responsibilities in the cooperative.
- What experiences have you had with your involvement in the cooperative?
- How would you describe the functions of your cooperative?
- What role do you think your cooperative plays in creating jobs and sustainable livelihoods?
- How do you rate the extent to which your cooperative has been able to fulfil its functions or purposes?
- How do you think you would propose that your cooperative be supported to create jobs and sustainable livelihoods in the municipality?

3.7.1.4 Data collection procedure

According to Denscombe (2007), researchers need to provide an explication of how they intent to collect the required data. In other words, they need to appropriately describe the procedure to be followed in gathering data. In this regard, the researcher followed the procedure describe below to ensure a coordinated process of data collection.

- An introductory session was conducted with an intention of the researcher being acquainted with the participants and seeking verbal affirmation for voluntary participation in the study as well as reiteration of the purpose and aim of the study.
- The audio-recording that the researcher used was checked to ensure their functionality and be prepared for recording of the interviews.
- A reflexive journal was used by the researcher to write additional notes and opinions as expressed by the participants apart from those responses aligned with the research questions posed including any relevant non-verbal expressions that the participants may exhibit during the interview and relating to the phenomena being inquired.
- Data derived from the participants' responses as audio-taped was transcribed and analysed using thematic content data analysis method.

Importantly, the interviews were performed in accordance with Covid-19 guidelines, with consideration for participants who were wearing masks and social distance, and in a setting that suited both the researcher and the interview subjects. In other words, the researcher made sure the venue of the identified and chosen interviews was distraction-free and well-ventilated. In particular, the interviews took place in the personnel departments of the individual cooperatives. The interviews took between 45 and an hour to complete. Between each interview session, there was a 10-minute pause for refreshments. Interviews took place between 10:00 am and 3 pm. The time frame selected was crucial in allowing the participants the opportunity to equally converse and voice their perspectives regarding the interview topics.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis's goal is to determine the interpretations and implications of the collected data (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2018). In this sense, the data gathered must be methodically evaluated and processed in order to yield any relevant and meaningful conclusions and reveal insights into the processes being researched (Grbich, 2013). In this study, thematic analysis was used to analyse the collected data. The researcher was interested in learning more about themes and patterns associated with the data to be collected, hence the use of thematic analysis was thought acceptable for this study. This means that in order to understand the experiences of participants towards the role of cooperatives in job creation and sustainable livelihoods, it was important to analyse the frequency of emerging themes and concepts used to understand the associated interpretations and meanings (Miles, Huberman & Saldanah, 2018). In order to further enhance the significance of the data gathered, the researcher used Tesch's eight steps of qualitative data analysis.

3.8.1 Tesch's eight steps of qualitative data analysis

As delineated in De Vos (2002), the following steps will be followed in analysis and interpreting the thematic content of the collected data:

- The researcher went over all of the transcriptions attentively, taking notes on any thoughts that spring to mind.

- The researcher chose one interview and read it, trying to make sense of the facts and writing any thoughts that come to mind.
- After reading the transcripts, the researcher organised them into groupings by creating columns labelled "important themes," "unique themes," and "leftovers."
- The researcher then used codes to shorten the themes and wrote the codes next to the appropriate text section. The researcher then looked at how the data is organised to see whether any new categories or codes had arisen.
- The researcher changed the themes into categories by finding the most descriptive language. The goal was to reduce the overall number of categories by putting related themes together. To show the interdependence of the categories, lines were drawn between them.
- The abbreviation of each category was then decided upon, and the codes were ordered alphabetically.
- The data for each category was gathered in one location and be analysed.
- After that, the analysed data was evaluated and reported in a narrative format.

3.9 ESTABLISHMENT OF TRUSTWORTHINESS

A researcher must ensure that the results of a research investigation, including the conclusions and recommendations that follow, can stand up to scrutiny (Stahl & King, 2020). In other words, research findings must be rigorous and reliable in order to be trusted. To achieve this, Stahl and King (2020) advise a researcher to describe how the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability criteria suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1985) will be met. The researcher has therefore described below how this criterion for determining the reliability of the research procedure and the findings was met in this study.

Table 3.9: Establishment of trustworthiness

Epistemological standards	Strategies	Application in the study
Truth-Value	Credibility	Internal validity and credibility are related. Regarding the participants and the environment

		in which the study was conducted, the researcher is confident in the veracity of the findings. The researcher did check members to verify trustworthiness for the study's aims.
Consistency	Dependability	Replicating the study in the same setting, using the same techniques, and using the same participants is what is meant by reliability. The researcher conducted a dependability audit to enable dependability in this study. This required the researcher to give a thorough overview of the data collection process. The data was accurately coded, and a description of the research process was also supplied. A fellow master's candidate who did not get involved in the study conducted a peer evaluation of the data that had been gathered.
Applicability	Transferability	A limited group of participants who are actively participating in the cooperatives were used in this study. In order to increase transferability, the researcher narrowed the pool of individuals until the data is saturated and thoroughly described.
Neutrality	Conformability	Conformability is the absence of bias in the research methodology

		and findings. In this regard, the researcher made sure that the findings are unbiased and free from the researcher's bias as feasible.
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3.9.1 Credibility

Lietz and Zayas (2010) contend that the credibility of the study findings is correlated with their truth-value. The researcher made sure that all participants opted to participate voluntarily and that they were provided the necessary information about the study's purpose and what the researcher planned to accomplish in order to ensure that the findings of this study are reliable. This means that their informed, active consent was obtained without coercion, incentive, or threat of punishment in the event that they choose not to participate.

Participants were informed ahead of time that their participation in this study does not imply that the researcher expects correct answers, but rather that they are willing to share their honest opinions about the phenomena under investigation. Participants were also encouraged to read through the interview transcripts to judge whether they are accurate in representing their views as presented (Creswell, 2014). In addition, the researcher followed all necessary ethical requirements in relation to this study.

3.9.2 Transferability

Shenton (2004) defined transferability as the degree to which research findings can be used in various situations. This study's transferability was assessed by examining how closely the environment in which it was done compared to others where some researchers would want to reproduce it. To establish an audit trail, which is essential for strengthening the verification of the results by a third party or another researcher, the researcher painstakingly documented all pertinent processes, including the technique utilized in this study.

3.9.3 Dependability

In order to ensure the reliability of the findings to be drawn from this study, the researcher employed her colleagues to evaluate and criticise the research processes and strategies used. Allowing for such a review and critique served primarily to help the researcher assess the relevance and synergy of the approaches used in regard to the outcomes obtained (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017).

3.9.4 Neutrality

Conformability is the absence of bias in the research methodology and findings. In this regard, the researcher made sure that the findings were as unbiased and free of the researcher's bias as feasible (Nowell et al., 2017).

3.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY

A qualitative exploratory research design was used for this study. In order to find, choose, and include participants who have sufficient knowledge of the phenomenon under study and are more likely to provide pertinent and in-depth information crucial to answering the main research question, a non-probability sampling approach, specifically a purposive sampling technique, was used. The researcher adhered to the Lincoln and Guba (1985) model of assurance of trustworthiness, which took into account the truth value, consistency, reliability, and portability of the study method.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF THE STUDY FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the Lepelle-Nkumpi Municipality, this qualitative case study investigated the function of cooperatives in generating employment and stable means of subsistence. In order to raise the standard of living for the communities in the municipality, it was decided to look into the functions and nature of a few selected cooperatives. It was also decided to evaluate the cooperatives' contributions to the generation of income and profit for future generations and to come up with ways to increase their contribution to job creation and sustainable livelihood through cooperatives. As a result, the researcher created the following sub-questions to direct the collection of research data: What are the characteristics and roles of the various cooperatives in the neighbourhood municipality? What impact have cooperatives had on generating jobs and stable incomes? What methods have been found to increase the role cooperatives play in generating jobs and stable incomes? Using audio-recorded face-to-face semi-structured interviews, the primary research data were collected from a purposive sample of nine cooperative managers and nine beneficiaries. The eight-step descriptive qualitative data analysis method developed by Tesch was used to analyse the research data that had been acquired. The theoretical framework that helped the researcher anchor the findings of this study included the People-Centered Approach and Sustainable Livelihoods Framework.

The researcher presents and discusses the research findings and the data that were analysed in this chapter. The results are presented in accordance with the goals of the study's intended investigation. Importantly, the transcribed responses of the participants' direct quotes are offered. The purpose of including participant direct quotes is to support the applicability of the conclusions drawn from the data analysis. The researcher centered her presentation and discussion of the study's findings on the themes and sub-themes that appeared. As a result, the presentation and discussion of the findings are preceded by a description of the participant's demographic profiles and details about the traits of the cooperatives under investigation.

4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES OF THE PARTICIPANTS

This section outlines the participant's demographic information. They include descriptions of the participants' self-reported gender, age, educational attainment, number of dependents, and length of residence in the Lepelle-Nkumpi Municipality, which serves as the study's geographic focus.

Table 4.2.1: Demographic profile of the participants

Participant	Gender	Age	Educational level	No. of dependants	No. of years of residence in the LNM
PM1	Female	48	Secondary	5	4
PM2	Male	51	ABET	3	6
PM3	Female	46	Diploma	4	13
PM4	Male	47	Diploma	2	7
PM5	Female	52	ABET	6	16
PB1	Female	34	Secondary	3	5
PB2	Female	41	ABET	2	7
PB3	Male	29	TVET College	1	5
PB4	Female	49	Secondary	4	8
PB5	Male	40	Diploma	3	6
PB6	Female	33	Degree	2	3
PB7	Male	43	ABET	5	11
PB8	Female	28	TVET College	2	22
PB9	Female	52	Secondary	7	23
PB10	Male	45	ABET	5	15
PB11	Female	28	Degree	2	17
PB12	Female	39	Diploma	4	15
PB13	Male	32	Secondary	5	10

4.2.1.1 Gender distribution of the participants

The gender distribution of the participants was very different. In the total number of participants of (N=18), eleven (N=11) were women and seven (N=7) were men. Specifically, the number of male managers of cooperatives was two (N=2) compared

to three (N=3) female managers. On the other hand, eight (N=8) female and five (N=5) male beneficiaries participated in the study. In the two groups of participants, namely cooperative managers and beneficiaries, the number of female participants (N=11) exceeded the number of male participants, who were only seven (N=7). These sample sizes were selected using purposive non-probability sampling. The underlying claim is that the researcher cannot draw any conclusions about the representativeness of the sample because its selection was based on a suitability criterion established and decided by the researcher. However, it has been observed that women are more likely to be involved in cooperatives compared to men.

4.2.1.2 Age distribution of the participants

Similar to the diversity of the gender distribution of the participants was their age distribution. In the interview protocol, the researcher did not specify any age groups from which the participants had to state their age. Nevertheless, the disclosure of their age during the interviews was sought and disclosed by them voluntarily. Consistent with their responses, the researcher found that there were six (N=6) participants whose ages ranged from 28 to 35 years. The participants, who were between 36 and 45 years old, were five in total (N=5). In addition, only seven participants (N=7) were between 46 and 59 years old. The average age of the participants was forty (40) years. Likewise, the youngest of the participants was 28 years old, while the oldest of all participants was 52 years old. The age distribution of the participants in this study showed that only a few younger people were studied and involved in the cooperatives, namely only 6 (N=6) compared to a total of twelve (N=12) participants who were older than 35 years.

4.2.1.3 Educational background of the participants

The individuals' educational backgrounds varied. There were an equal number of participants who completed secondary education and adult basic education (ABET). Specifically, five participants received secondary education and five others received ABET. Participants who held diplomas were four compared to two participants who held bachelor's degrees. Similarly, two other participants received training at TVET College. Interestingly, there were an equal number of female (N=2) and male participants (N=2) holding diplomas. Although none of the female participants received ABET, there were three males who received ABET. Four of the participants

had a high school diploma, while only two of the other participants had a bachelor's degree. Again, only two male participants had received a TVET college education compared to a single female participant. Of the five (N=5) surveyed cooperative managers, none had a college degree. However, they either had ABET, secondary education or held a diploma.

4.2.1.4 Participants' number of dependents

The researcher wanted to know how many people the participants thought of as their immediate dependents. Participant responses indicated that a large number of participants had between three and five dependants. More specifically, there were ten (N=10) participants who had between three and five dependants. Almost six participants (N=6) had either one or two dependents, while only two (N=2) participants reported having between six and seven dependents. From this data, it can be concluded that all those involved had dependants whose support obligation they were responsible for.

4.2.1.5 Number of years of residence in the municipality

The number of years that each participant had lived in the Lepelle-Nkumpi municipality was requested of them. The majority of the participants, according to their comments when questioned, had lived in the municipality for a sizable amount of time. In particular, a participant's longest period of time as a resident of the municipality was 23 years. Once more, the shortest period of time a participant had lived in the municipality was three years. However, there were five (N=5) participants who lived in the municipality between the ages of three and five, while a total of six (N=6) participants lived between the ages of six and twelve. Among participants who had lived in the municipality between thirteen and twenty years, there were five (N=5). The duration of the participants' residence in the municipality served as the basis for the researchers' survey, which they used to gauge their familiarity with the socio-economic dynamics of the municipality's population. The researcher discovered that everyone who took part in the study had a thorough awareness of the difficulties facing the great majority of residents in the neighbourhood.

4.3 DATA ON PARTICIPANTS ENGAGEMENT IN THE COOPERATIVES

The demographic profiles of the individuals are included in addition., this section presents descriptive data regarding the participants' engagements in the investigated cooperatives in the Lepelle-Nkumpi Municipality. The descriptive information that is delineated below include the type of cooperatives, number of years the cooperatives have been in operation and functioning, the number of years the participants have been involved in them and their positions as well as information on the type or nature of in-service training they received.

Table 4.3.1: Data on participants' engagements in cooperatives

Participant	Type of cooperative	Years in operation	Years of involvement	Position	In-service training received
PM1	Agriculture	6	5	Manager	Climate change and sustainable farming
PM2	Skills Building	7	8	Manager	Leadership and Management
PM3	Livestock	8	7	Manager	Breeding
PM4	Tourism	4	4	Manager	Project Management
PM5	Bread making	4	9	Manager	None
PB1	Livestock	6	4	Beneficiary	None
PB2	Skills Building	5	9	Beneficiary	None
PB3	Bread making	7	7	Beneficiary	None
PB4	Agriculture	3	4	Beneficiary	None
PB5	Tourism	3	2	Beneficiary	None
PB6	Bread	9	6	Beneficiary	None

	making			y	
PB7	Skills Building	3	5	Beneficiar y	None
PB8	Agriculture	5	3	Beneficiar y	None
PB9	Livestock	4	3	Beneficiar y	None
PB10	Skills Building	5	8	Beneficiar y	None
PB11	Agriculture	7	8	Beneficiar y	None
PB12	Livestock	7	3	Beneficiar y	None
PB13	Tourism	4	8	Beneficiar y	None

4.3.1.1 Type of cooperative as per the participants' involvement

Participants were involved in different types of cooperatives, including agriculture, livestock, and bread making, and tourism and skills development. Of the eighteen (N=18) participants, four worked in an agriculturally oriented cooperative, four (N=4) in training and another four (N=4) in a livestock cooperative. Of the remaining six participants, three worked in a bread-making cooperative, while the other three participants worked in a tourism-oriented cooperative. Thus, the majority of the participants (N=12), the researcher studied were involved in agricultural cooperatives, skill development, and livestock farming.

4.3.1.2 Period of the cooperative in operation

The researcher noted during the interviews that the participants know in what period or in how many years the cooperatives in which they are involved were founded. The majority of the cooperatives had been in existence for between one and five years, the researcher discovered based on the responses of the participants. Seven cooperatives were in operation between the years of six and ten. Therefore, among the surveyed, there was not a single cooperative that had been in operation for more than ten years. Co-ops that focused on bread making had the most years of

operation, followed by livestock co-ops with eight years of operation. The cooperatives that had the fewest years of operation were those in agriculture and tourism, at three years.

4.3.1.3 Participants’ positions and years of involvement in the cooperatives

The positions held by the participants in the cooperatives ranged between managers and beneficiaries. Five (N=5) participants were in managerial positions in the cooperatives, while thirteen (N=13) participants were beneficiaries. In comparison to men, the management positions in the cooperatives examined were predominantly occupied by women. There were nine (N=9) participants who had been active in the cooperative for between one and five years. Nine (N=9) participants stated that they had been involved in the cooperatives for between six and ten years. None of the participants had worked in the cooperatives for more than ten years. The highest number of years that a participant worked in the cooperatives was nine, and the lowest was two years.

4.3.1.4 In-service training received

The participants were asked about the type of in-service training they received during their time in the cooperatives. The researcher found that the majority of participants had not received any in-service training. Most of these participants, who indicated that they had not received any training, were the beneficiaries of the cooperatives. However, the managers of the cooperatives reported that they received in-service training covering breeding, project management, climate change and sustainable agriculture, leadership and management.

4.4 THEMES AND SUB-THEMES THAT EMERGED

The themes, sub-themes, and categories that the researcher identified through the analysis and interpretation of the participant data are presented and discussed in this section. Importantly, these themes and sub-themes are in keeping with the research goals that the researcher wanted to accomplish with this study, as shown in the table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4: Description of themes and sub-themes that emerged

Theme 4.4.1: The nature and function of	Sub-theme 4.4.1.1: Participants
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cooperatives in the municipality	perspectives on the role of cooperatives
	Sub-theme 4.4.1.2: Rationale for the establishment of the cooperatives
	Categories of sub-themes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Longevity of participants engagements in the cooperatives
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recruitment of cooperatives memberships
	Sub-theme 4.4.1.3: Sources of financial support for the cooperatives
	Sub-theme 4.4.1.4: Participation of the communities in the cooperatives functioning
Theme 4.4.2: The contribution of cooperative in job creation and sustainable livelihoods	Sub-theme 4.4.2.1: Cooperatives contributions to capacity and competence building
	Sub-theme 4.4.2.2: Impact of cooperatives on improving the community's livelihoods
	Sub-theme 4.4.2.3: Mechanisms for stewardship over resources utilised by cooperatives
	Sub-theme 4.4.2.4: Participants outlooks on the successful sustainability of cooperatives

Theme 4.4.1: The nature and function of cooperatives in the municipality

The researcher probed the participants about the nature and functions of their cooperatives in the municipality. In responding to the question on what they perceived to be the nature and functions of their cooperatives, the sub-themes that emerged included the participants' perceptions on the roles of the cooperatives they were involved in. Furthermore, the participants provided expositions of how the

cooperatives were established and the rationale for their establishment. Another sub-theme that emerged from the participants' responses included the degree to which their communities participate in the cooperatives activities and the sources of the cooperatives financial support. These sub-themes are explicated in further details below.

Sub-theme 4.4.1.1: Participants perspectives on the role of cooperatives

The researcher inquired into the participants' perceptions of their own passion and desires to ensure that their cooperatives contributed to improving their communities' standard of living. It was found that the majority of the participants were passionate of their involvement in the cooperatives. They explicated their engagement in the cooperatives as having been premised on their desire to ensure that their impoverished living circumstances are improved. However, there were varied reported perceptions pertaining to the degree to which the participants perceive the cooperatives as contributing to improvement of their standards of living. With that being said, the beneficiaries indicated that the degree of cooperatives ability to alleviate poverty, create job and ensure sustainable livelihoods is impeded. A contributing factor cited by the majority of the participants as impeding the cooperatives roles encompassed the dearth of understanding among the managers of the mandate that the cooperative ought to have pursued. These views are captured by the participant who indicated, for instance, that:

“Our engagement in the cooperatives was premised on the hope that they will play a significant role in helping combat poverty in our communities and provide lasting job opportunities for the larger segment of the community members. This has been the passion and hope that we clinched to since joining the cooperatives. However, the roles of our cooperatives are limited and this is not of our own doing because scaling up our operations and functions really needs varied support from the community and government.”

Sub-theme 4.4.1.2: Rationale for the establishment of the cooperatives

Additionally, the beneficiaries in contrast to the perspective shared by the interviewed managers believed that there is limited understanding of the specificity of the roles that persons engaged in the cooperatives need to play. Without an understanding of their specific roles, the beneficiaries asserted that managers are limited in their efficacy to guide the cooperatives towards a path to ensuring sustainable profitability and enhancement of their abilities to create jobs. Hence,

these beneficiaries pointed out that there should have been a selection of persons with requisite competencies to manage the cooperatives. Apart from the narrative shared by the participants, the researcher found that the establishment of the cooperative remained the responsibility of the local counsellors. However, the end of the local counsellors' terms of services in the municipality marked the possible end of the efficacy of the cooperatives because the participants believed that no substantial skills transfers were undertaken by the local counsellors to build capacity within the cooperatives to ensure their sustainable functioning. In addition, they believed that the paucity of stringent selection criteria the local counsellors used in selecting the persons managing the cooperatives was flawed and distorted for aggrandising their own interests. Consequently, persons who were appropriately competent to lead the cooperatives were excluded. It is these situational factors, as the participants believed that impeded the proper functioning of the cooperative in executing the responsibilities and roles for which they were initially established to accomplish. In this vein, another participant pointed out that:

“We accept that some people had to assume the responsibility to establish our cooperative but from its establishment, the role of the counsellors had been varied and their motives are varied as well. Honestly, we cannot shy from accepting that nepotism and political affiliations played to some extent a significant role in some people being placed in the management positions while they less deserved. This situation need to be changed as the cooperatives grows and flourishes because we need people who are competent enough to guide us through the difficult journeys the cooperative often go through.”

- **Longevity of participants' engagements in the cooperatives**

The longevity of the participants' engagements in the cooperatives was varied. However, the researcher found that the majority of the participants had been engaged in the cooperatives for a period exceeding three years. The longevity of their involvement in the cooperatives, as the participants mentioned, was predicated on a constellation of their passion and commitment to improving their own lives and the lives of their communities. The paths that the participants cited as integral to improving their own lives was through having access to income generated through their participation in the cooperatives' functions and operations. For instance, one participant remarked that:

“What interested me to stay for so long in this cooperative is that I needed to change my life for the better. There are no employment opportunities and participating in this cooperative has helped me to understand what having a sense of community means.

We sell our products to them and they are support in an amazing way and these relationships help us to earn an income to support our dependents.”

In accordance with these findings, Twala (2012) argues that a number of internal and external variables, including how they are organised, viewed, and managed, impair the co-operatives' ability to contribute to the nation's difficulties of job creation and poverty alleviation. The approach will enable the cooperative members to share their own experiences in cooperatives and suggest inputs that inform future development in their business sector (Bouchard, 2019). The findings are not corresponding with the scholars because no matter how long the experience of managers, maybe, cooperatives have no clear future plans to either generate profit nor to improve the employment rate. The findings demonstrate that more percentages of people with the longest working experience; however, evidence does not demonstrate their capabilities towards brighter sustainable livelihoods on job creation. The other respondent said that ‘the longer he is working in the cooperative, the more frustrated he becomes to perceive the future of the cooperative.’

- **Recruitment of cooperatives memberships**

There are cooperatives' members, especially managers and beneficiaries who have signed contracts. The cooperatives that followed employment procedure were in majority. The study found that the majority of the participants believed that the advertisement of the posts, shortlisting of suitable candidates and then calling them for interviews, then issuing of appointment letters was the recruitment procedure being followed. The others with less percentage identify people and sign contract as they are familiar with people who qualify in the community. The findings show that cooperatives who follow employment policies are more than those who do not adhere to them. This shows that there will be fairness in employing suitable candidates in the future for cooperatives. The findings indicate that cooperatives recruitment for new employees is very slow as anticipated and this affects the mandate of reducing unemployment and improving living standards. The movements are rated successful by the way they employ large number of people and their ability to adjust to ever changing and increasing market pressure of the economy (Altman, 2009:6). The responses contradict with Altman, (2009:6) that cooperatives are rated successful for large employment. Participants reveal that they can only create short-term jobs not permanent positions given their financial struggles. They indicated that

the cooperatives will take some time to recover from the damage caused by COVID 19.

They indicated that it assists them to include the vulnerable groups, women, youth and people living with disabilities. Those with recruitment policy were in the minority. The percentage is very low given what the study entails for job creation and sustainable livelihoods. This shows that the cooperatives disregarded the recruitment policy and this could hinder the directive of reducing unemployment. The cooperative members who are still developing educational policies were at the majority. This means that their plans for trainings and workshops were not prioritized and this could impact much on the growth of the business. The findings negatively affect the scholars who thought that the aim was to empower blacks in economic development through the various departments like, Agriculture, Social Development, Local Economic Development (LED), Limpopo Economic Development Agency (LEDA) and others (Shava & Hofisi, 2019). Without educational policy, the cooperatives could remain in the same level as beneficiaries could not access updated information relevant to their development. The question was meant to achieve objective 3 of the study. This does not mean that policy making should move back from interventions towards sustainability, but it should leave more freedom and capacities to people who are already active and have more knowledge about local needs and opportunities (Kaphengst, Timo, Velten, Eike & Karola, 2014). This suggests that sustainability of cooperatives could be realized by capable management regardless of where she /he come from, as long as the person can deliver for the mandate of the cooperatives.

Sub-theme 4.4.1.3: Sources of financial support for the cooperatives

The researcher found that the cooperatives studied were partially receiving state subsidies. Precisely, four of the seven participants had received state subsidies in the past four years. According to the participants, the larger part of their financial support had been received from the government, particularly the Department of the Social Development. Without the government subsidy, the cooperative had no alternative sources of funding. Although the researcher found that several attempts were made to solicit funding from other sources including the National Lotteries Commission, they had not succeeded. According to the participants, lack of

knowledge on compiling grant proposal had been a major issue because a plethora of their managers have neither knowledge of how accurate the grant proposal was to be completed nor what information that needs to be contained in the grant proposals is required. These constellations of skill-related factors impeded the cooperatives access to alternative available financial support from other sources of funding except the government subsidies. Thus, there was acknowledgement among the participants that scaling up their operations and funding the sustainability of their functions had been challenging.

The irregularities in the scheduling and receipt of financial subsidies from the government, particularly the Department of Social Development, were also mentioned by the participants as being another obstacle to the effectiveness of their activities. Participants specifically said that financial aid they receive from the department (DoSD) is frequently delayed. The delay in the provision and receipt of these subsidies was cited by the participants as an impediment not only to their operations but to the livelihoods of the beneficiaries as payment of stipends are delayed. For the cooperatives whose focus of attention was on the production of agricultural products, the Department of Agriculture was applauded for being forthright coming in timeous provision of subsidies. The subsidies received by these cooperatives were in monetary form, capacity building and provision of seedlings on agreed-upon time periods. In a similar vein, only a fraction of other financial subsidies were obtained from the IDTC.

The respondents explained that they were able to buy groceries, take children to school, and build houses with income generated from cooperatives. They further alluded that the income was supplemented by a scheme called SERF which assists people in groups with funding. There was a new information that cooperatives are no longer paying beneficiaries on monthly basis but quarterly. The change came as the condition from the funders and had to be implemented with immediate effect. The common feeling within beneficiaries was for government to change the decision of quarterly payment but rather maintain monthly salaries as this weakens staff morale. The cooperatives were able to acquire roundavels, beds, showers, machinery and backup generators. The purchased goods were for the cooperatives production and manufacturing. However, their business suffered a great loss due to COVID 19

pandemic. The frequent decline of economy in the country could impact much on government funding to cooperatives and this will only increase unemployment rather than reducing it. Therefore, the cooperatives are able to acquire assets although is with slow pace. The findings dispute the statement that goals and objectives of this policy was to attack poverty through job creation programmes and improve the living standards of people on a local level (Emmanuel, 2016). The truth is that cooperatives are struggling financially on a local level and the sustainable livelihood is still a dream to come true.

The findings reveal that those who said were satisfied with income paid on monthly basis were those who complained about being paid quarterly. This did not sink well with beneficiaries as it was imposed by funders as a condition without being notified or prepared for it. The responses challenge this statement of the scholar who said, “emphasis on cooperatives openness will enhance management to access available resources, retain employees and sustain growth (Davis, 2021:77)”. The findings show that income was satisfying to employees as the participants were managers. There were those who complained about the income as he said, “it’s better than nothing but not satisfying”. This means that salaries from cooperatives were not regarded as decent hence these complains. The participants said that they were able to meet basic needs like food, shelter, education and clothing as well as burial societies. This was a sensitive topic as it raised different emotions and caused a lot argument among participants. The researcher observed that transparency was a big challenge with regard to money/salary.

Sub-theme 4.4.1.4: Participation of the communities in the cooperatives functioning

According to reports, the community's involvement in the cooperatives was modest. Specifically, it was claimed that the community hardly ever took part in decisions affecting the cooperatives' viability and future. The administrators claimed that because the community members didn't comprehend the significance of their participation, they were hesitant to take part in the cooperative's decision-making procedures. These viewpoints, as held by the cooperatives' administrators, were, however, different from those of the beneficiaries. The cooperatives' managers, in

the opinion of the beneficiaries, deliberately obstructed community input into decision-making procedures.

According to them, it is the lack of transparency in how the cooperatives are operated which dissuade the community from participating. This is because, as the beneficiaries mentioned, financial management practices and accountability in the cooperatives is lacking. Thus, the majority of the participants pointed out that in the absence of accountability from the cooperatives managers, the community perceive their participation as illegitimate and solicited solely to attest to the decisions that have already been made. Hence, it was reported that the community perceived their participation as less likely to make a meaningful impact or change in how the cooperatives function and are being lead. Consequently, the beneficiaries stated that the community appeared to be supportive to the cooperatives only as consumers of the products being produced and sold by and from the cooperatives. This skewed community participation in the cooperatives only as consumers of produces or products have impacted the cooperatives profit margins and sustainable profitability.

Theme 4.4.2: The contribution of cooperative in job creation and sustainable livelihoods

Sub-theme 4.4.2.1: Cooperatives contributions to capacity and competence building

The researcher probed the participants on their perspectives regarding the contributions that their engagements in the cooperatives have made towards building their skills capacity and competencies. The competencies that the researcher explored involved competencies that are work-related and important to enabling them to perform their assigned responsibilities with merit. The findings obtained in this context were indicative of distinct perspectives that the participants held. More precisely, the growth in the competencies of the participants in the cooperatives was reportedly constrained. A few of the participants, particularly the beneficiaries indicated to having learned no significant lessons that they can translate into enhancing their skills capacity outside the cooperatives. This is because they perceived the cooperative as inefficient in terms of skills transfer amongst its beneficiaries.

In another vein, the participants indicated that the cooperatives seldom recruit new employees. This limited recruitment of new participants is explicated by the scarcity of funds the cooperatives are faced with especially in providing stipends to the participants. For the participants who had already participated in the operations of the cooperatives, the acquisition of the assets using the income they received from the cooperatives was substantially non-existent. More precisely, the income in the form of stipend that the participants in the cooperatives receive was cited as significantly lower. The adequacies of the income which the participants received for their participation in the cooperatives was considered adequate not to enable them accumulate assets other than purchase of basic necessities to sustain their daily living.

Importantly, the researcher found that the dearth of opportunities for receipt of formal and informal trainings for the cooperatives managers and beneficiaries were blamed on the overseeing departments. According to the participants, government departments to which the cooperatives are registered with do not offer training opportunities. In a similar vein, when training opportunities meant for the cooperatives memberships are planned, only a few of them are invited. Moreover, they expressed minimal understanding and knowledge of the process that the government departments undertake in selecting and deciding on the eligibility of the cooperative membership selected to attend or receive trainings. These findings were commensurate with the assertions made by Thaba and Mbohwa (2015) that the survival of cooperatives is determined by the degree of potential competencies the cooperatives membership possesses. These academics also contend that the lack of trainings offered to cooperative membership undermines the long-term viability of the cooperatives.

However, the cooperatives' reliance on government agencies to provide trainings needs to be reconsidered. They should assume the responsibility to establish networks with flourishing cooperatives to share information and skills to militate against the dearth of training opportunities the government departments are expected to provide. They further explained that the trainings assisted them to identify gaps within their cooperatives and unable them to plan for future trainings. However, there are those who said the trainings and capacity building were neither effective nor useful and are at 10%. Although the study found that cooperative

structures could, to some extent, encourage behavioural shifts toward more sustainable behaviours, these findings need to be confirmed by more research in other circumstances (Timo & Karola, 2014).

Sub-theme 4.4.2.3: Mechanisms for stewardship over resources utilised by cooperatives

The cooperatives are not yet planning at mechanisms for stewardship over resources that they use. There were no cooperatives which the researcher found to have plans to brand. The participants indicated that concerted efforts need to be expended on ensuring the sustainability of their products and applying for branding. For some other participants, it was crucial that there be efficient planning to turn their cooperative to companies. According to them, this direction as taken by the cooperatives management will be helpful towards generating more profit which will change the local economic status of their communities. The cooperatives which had stringent plans for job creation further alluded that, they need more staff to produce more products to meet the demands of consumers, own the land and not permission to occupy. The participants who were for building their business to be companies want to supply all malls in South Africa and pay salaries on monthly basis. Moreover, cooperatives members expressed the vision to see their cooperatives competing with international companies. In the participants' view, it is only through enhanced competitiveness that the cooperatives profit margins and sustainability that substantial profits can be made and reinvested in the scaling up of the cooperatives operations and functions.

Sub-theme 4.4.2.4: Participants outlooks on the successful sustainability of cooperatives

The participants believed that the cooperatives' viability and performance in the future depended on factors outside of their control. The majority of participants said that in order to improve the cooperative's sustainability, certain variables need to be prioritized and taken into account. These circumstances as explicated by the participants included the adequacy of trainings and competencies that the cooperatives members urgently need to undergo and attain. Moreover, they

indicated that the cooperatives managements should seize opportunities to develop and implement sustainability plans that are evidence-based. These circumstances, as the participants indicated, must be accompanied by the enhancement of the market competitiveness of the cooperatives both regionally and internationally. However, they recognised that in as much as the cooperatives are operated not in accordance with the improved standards of transparency and accountability, minimal strides would be made in enhancing their competitiveness and support across the communities. These findings reveal that the commonalities of cooperatives to make a turn-around of their current status to successful companies that increase job opportunities. The responses support Bourne (2007) who states that based on social movements and civil society require humility and a respect for the diverse worldviews, opinions, and strategies. The researcher observed that cooperatives should have changed mind-set to empower themselves with skills to avoid dependency on government funding for their future success.

4.5 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

The conclusions drawn from the original study data were presented and discussed in this chapter. The researcher used an exploratory, interpretative, and contextual research design in this qualitative study. The research data obtained was aimed at investigating the role and functions of the seven selected cooperatives in job creation and sustainable livelihoods in the municipality of Lepelle-Nkumpi. The three-fold objectives were to explore how the selected cooperatives contributes to job creation and sustainable livelihoods; to assess the contributions of the cooperatives to income and profit generation for sustainable future generations and identify strategies that can improve the contribution of cooperatives to job creation and sustainable livelihood through effective partnerships, market presence and access to on-going capacity building and empowerment. The results of the data analysis showed that cooperatives' contributions to the establishment of jobs and sustainable means of subsistence are limited. The financial support that the cooperatives received was inconsistent and inadequate to help scale up their functions and operations. The community's participation in the cooperatives functions was minimal. The dearth of transparency and accountability in decision-making were contributing factors that limited the active and meaningful participation of the community. Moreover, there were limited opportunities for the cooperatives membership in

receipt of trainings and attainment of competencies crucial to ensuring their knowledge and understanding of effective pathways to enhancing the efficacy of their operations and functions. The conclusions and suggestions for the formulation of strategies to increase the efficacy of cooperatives in the production of jobs and sustainable lifestyles in the Lepelle-Nkumpi Municipality are offered in Chapter Five and are based on the findings mentioned in this chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Cooperatives are recognised around the world as ideal pathways to support and improve the socio-economic life of citizens. Establishing cooperatives focuses on improving living standards for communities based on shared interests and partnerships for sustainable development. Existing evidence clearly shows that cooperatives were an important way to increase self-reliance. They provide opportunities for communities to use their own strengths and assets to improve their livelihoods. In the high-income countries, mainly Western and European countries, cooperatives have been proclaimed as essential means of fostering community engagement in creating sustainable livelihoods. In low-income countries, mainly African and some Latin American countries, cooperatives have otherwise not been successful in creating sustainable livelihoods for citizens. However, positive progress has been made with the accelerated delivery of state subsidies and the formalisation of the cooperative landscape. Concerning their contribution to raising citizens' living standards, cooperatives' role in South Africa is rife with debate and controversy.

Although established to encourage and ensure the achievement of mutual benefits for beneficiaries, evidence shows that the beneficial effects of cooperative are not widely exploited by communities. In particular, there is little empirical evidence about the role cooperatives play in creating jobs and promoting sustainable livelihoods. This lack of empirical evidence is evident in rural communities where the establishment of cooperatives seems to have taken root. In light of these claims, the

purpose of this study was to examine how cooperatives contribute to the development of sustainable livelihoods and employment in the Lepelle-Nkumpi Municipality of the Limpopo Province. As part of this study goal, the researcher needed to reveal insights into the effectiveness of the cooperatives' functionality and performance. The researcher sought to offer suggestions on tactics that might be created and put into practice to improve the role of cooperatives in generating employment and sustainable livelihoods in the neighbourhood municipality.

As a result, this chapter includes an overview of the research and its key findings. On how to adopt the best techniques to enhance the role of cooperatives in generating employment and sustainable livelihoods in the neighbourhood municipality, recommendations are made to cooperatives management, beneficiaries, the Department of Social Development, and the municipality. Additionally, recommendations are provided for future studies on the contribution of cooperatives to sustainable development and employment creation.

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

An outline of the study's organisational structure is given in this section. The researcher outlines the study's organisational framework in this section with a focus on the chosen research approach. In light of this, the following subsections provide an overview of the research design and techniques employed in this work.

- Section 5.2.1: Research design and method
- Section 5.2.2: Research objectives and questions
- Section 5.2.3: Summary and interpretations of findings
- Section 5.2.4: Conclusions
- Section 5.2.5: Recommendations
- Section 5.2.6: Areas for future research

5.2.1 Research design and method

The methodology used for this study was qualitative research. The researcher was interested in examining the varied experiences and viewpoints of cooperative

members and beneficiaries in connection to their function in generating employment and enduring means of subsistence. The researcher made sure to analyse the participants in the context of their real-world situations in order to meet this study's objective. Similar to this, the researcher needs to build a rapport of trust with the participants in order to learn about their opinions and experiences. These efforts are critical for a qualitative researcher and recognise that qualitative researchers are central to data collection and the co-creation of meanings that participants hold about their experiences and perspectives. As a result, the researcher employed an interpretivist approach to comprehend the various meanings participants connected to their experiences regarding the contribution of cooperatives to the creation of jobs and sustainable lives. Of great importance to the researcher's ability to document, describe, explain, and reveal insights into participants' experiences and perspectives on the subject under study was the researcher's decision to use an exploratory, descriptive, and contextual research design.

The primary data that the researcher sought to obtain from the participants was collected through the use of semi-structured face-to-face interviews. These interviews allowed the researcher to further examine the participants' responses, thereby initiating a collaborative process of understanding the phenomenon being studied and brainstorming solutions. A total of eighteen (N=18) participants were interviewed. They comprised of purposively selected sample of nine managers and nine beneficiaries of selected cooperatives. More than two years of active engagement with and in the cooperatives and voluntary, active and written consent were required for inclusion in the study. Seven cooperatives were selected as research sites, separately focusing on agriculture, livestock, tillage, vegetable marketing and distribution, food processing, tourism, and skills capacity and empowerment. Each cooperative the researcher sampled gave their consent for the study to be done.

The researcher developed and pilot-tested the interview questions that were utilized in the single interview protocol with all of the chosen individuals. In other words, open-ended questions resembling those in the interview protocol were asked to the participants. The researcher's primary qualitative data was analysed utilising the qualitative data analysis approach. The researcher specifically applied Tesch's eight-level method for analysing descriptive qualitative data. As a result, chapter four of

this research report's findings was presented as a conversation and a story, complete with participant verbatim quotes.

5.2.2 Research objectives and questions

The defined research objectives that led this study were threefold: First, the researcher studied the nature and functions of the seven selected cooperatives in Lepelle-Nkumpi Municipality, Limpopo Province. The researcher's purpose was to describe the traits of the chosen cooperatives studied in the first study objective. The functions of the chosen cooperatives' concentration and scope were among the aforementioned attributions. The researcher's search for descriptive data about cooperatives' characteristics revealed a connection between their areas of focus and the extent to which they help members, beneficiaries, and the community at large build sustainable livelihoods and secure employment. The researcher was also able to ascertain how the cooperatives were operating, including their structures and the degree to which they were properly organized in accordance with the Cooperatives Act 14 of 2005, as modified, and the Principles of Good Governance of Cooperatives (DSBD, 2019). In light of this, the research topic the researcher looked into was, "What are the roles and characteristics of the chosen cooperatives that determine their significance and purpose in raising living standards in the communities in Lepelle-Nkumpi Municipality?"

Second, the researcher assessed the contribution that the selected cooperatives made to creating jobs and sustainable livelihoods in their respective communities. In assessing their contributions in this context, the researcher drew on both the participants' experiences and the information provided on the scope of their contribution. This information was crucial for the researcher to determine whether the managers and beneficiaries of the cooperatives, from their own perspective, perceive their contribution to the creation of jobs and sustainable livelihoods as accelerated or hindered. By formulating the second study objective, the researcher was therefore able to examine the strengths and challenges that the cooperative possesses and faces in order to contribute to the creation of jobs and sustainable livelihoods. The researcher's main research question was "How do cooperatives help to the establishment of jobs and sustainable lives and are the profits made sustainable for future generations?" in order to accomplish the stated goal.

The third objective focused on providing recommendations for strategies that can be developed and implemented to improve the contribution of cooperatives to job creation and sustainable livelihoods. In this regard, the primary and secondary data obtained from the participants and substantiated by the analysis of the records helped the researcher to achieve this objective. In order to contribute to job development and sustainable livelihoods, the contextualized data from the participants revealed important insights into the areas in which they are successful and hampered. With the understanding drawn from the synthesised research data, the researcher was able to make recommendations on strategies that cooperatives management can implement to improve their contribution to job creation and sustainable livelihoods. The research question formulated in this regard was “what strategies could be implemented to improve the contribution of cooperatives to job creation through effective partnerships, market presence and access, and on-going capacity building and empowerment?”

5.2.3 Summary and interpretations of findings

The summary and analysis of the study's findings are covered in this section. Based on the research provided in Chapter 4 findings, the key findings presented in this section. Importantly, the conclusions have been summarised and interpreted in light of the study's goals and pertinent research questions.

5.2.3.1 Research objective one

The initial research goal was to examine the nature and purposes of a few selected cooperatives in the Limpopo Province municipality of Lepelle-Nkumpi. The researcher found that the cooperatives were product-producing cooperatives. Although the cooperatives were all registered under the Cooperatives Act 54 of 2015, as amended, they had poorly established organisational structures. Personnel seen as managers of the cooperatives were insufficiently trained to make strategic decisions related to the sustainable future of the cooperatives. Furthermore, operational and strategic decisions about the sustainability of the cooperatives were made whenever the cooperatives faced threats to their productivity and sustainability. This unclear delineation and understanding of the importance of planning for cooperatives' strategic decisions negatively impacted their consistency, viability and sustainable productivity. The focus of these cooperatives was on the

production of agricultural products for income generation, tourism and capacity building and empowerment. The range of functions of the studied cooperatives was limited. Although some of them focused on the production of agricultural products, they did not have a clearly defined and coherent product distribution strategy. They had no established market networks with retail companies to sell their products to improve production sustainability and profitability.

5.2.3.2 Research objective two

There was general recognition among the beneficiaries of the cooperatives that positive progress had been made in creating employment opportunities. However, the use of the employment opportunities created by the cooperative was limited in scope. According to the beneficiaries, while their involvement in the cooperatives has instilled a sense of active participation in the community, the rewards they receive have not resulted in any significant changes in their livelihoods. These views were shared by cooperative managers who expressed that their intentions to create jobs and ensure sustainable livelihoods for both their beneficiaries and the community have been negatively impacted. The profitability of the cooperatives has been hampered by their inability to penetrate the regional market flow to establish and sustain trade networks. As a result, profit margins have been impacted as their product distribution strategy is exclusively focused on the local market, where purchasing potential for their products was severely limited.

In addition, the lack of established networks with other cooperatives outside their jurisdictions to share knowledge and information on good practice for expanding product production and marketing was cited as a negative factor. This is because the cooperatives had not otherwise learnt adequate lessons in their area of product manufacturing and marketing. The lack of adoption and adaptation of lessons learned somewhere for implementation in their areas had affected their competitiveness as well as knowledge of and adherence to corporate governance principles. More specifically, the study found that cooperatives did not have a clear and coherent vision and mission of what needed to be achieved within a given timeframe, and many of them had not convincingly analysed their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats before and during their initial establishments. This situation explained the researcher's finding that their decisions, whether

strategic or operational, were consistently made occasionally when the decision-making was deemed necessary.

Another important finding was that cooperatives management lacked essential training and skills, including financial and project management. This lack of skills not only affected the efficiency of the functioning of the cooperatives, but also led to several challenges. These challenges, widely recognised by cooperatives managers, included poor information/records, a lack of accountability and transparency, and an inability to achieve significant community participation in the cooperatives. Given the lack of accountability and transparency, the researcher found that cooperatives do not have clear policies for hiring and selecting management staff and enhancing community participation. Therefore, the lack of consultation mechanisms to improve community participation and understanding of the purpose and functions of cooperatives has been shown to contribute to insufficient support from the communities in which the cooperatives are located. This situation had resulted in the managers of the cooperatives assuming exclusive decision-making powers and failing to use viable means, including technological advances, to market the cooperative and improve the communities' knowledge of its functions and/or operations.

5.2.3.3 Research objective three

The third objective focused on providing recommendations for strategies that can be developed and implemented to improve the contribution of cooperatives to job creation and sustainable livelihoods. Consistent with this research objective, the researcher found that within the cooperatives, little attention was paid to strengthening their recruitment policies to encourage significant community engagement. In addition, the payment of subsidies intended to help the cooperatives to expand their operations and create employment opportunities has been hampered by inconsistent timeframes for providing and receiving government subsidies. Failure to identify the training needs of cooperative managers and beneficiaries hampered the acquisition of skills critical to strengthening their operations and improving their knowledge-sharing links with other cooperatives outside their communities. In this way, the cooperatives' market share has not been adequately exploited to strengthen

their profit margins and ensure sustainable livelihoods for their beneficiaries and create jobs for the communities.

5.3 CONCLUSION

In the Limpopo Province's Lepelle-Nkumpi Municipality, this qualitative, exploratory case study looked into the function of cooperatives in generating employment and stable means of subsistence. The researcher was interested in learning how existing cooperatives in the municipality are assisting in reducing the high levels of poverty and rising unemployment. Adopting the qualitative research approach was crucial to allow the researcher to explore participants' experiences and perspectives in their real-world settings. In this sense, the findings showed that the existence of cooperatives in the municipality of Lepelle-Nkumpi has not played a significant role in creating jobs and improving sustainable livelihoods for beneficiaries and communities.

The fragmentation of their operations, manifested in the lack of significant profit margins, limited regional market penetration and lack of networks with other organisations to share knowledge of best practice, has adversely affected the upscaling and efficacy of their operations. Exclusive decision-making by cooperative managers further alienated community engagement and understanding of cooperative functions. As a result, there has been no significant support from the communities in which the cooperatives are located and in which they operate. The inability of cooperative management to identify, recruit and leverage the competencies of some community members and to use advances in technology to engage communities has not resulted in positive outcomes for the cooperatives. In this vein, it can be concluded that the studied cooperatives did not have a significant impact in job creation and ensuring sustainable livelihoods for beneficiaries and communities.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to increase the role of cooperatives in generating employment and fostering sustainable lives in Lepelle-Nkumpi Municipality, Limpopo Province, the recommendations in this section must be taken into account and put into practice. The researcher's suggestions are based on the key conclusions drawn from the synthesized and/or interpreted research data. The management of the cooperatives,

the Department of Social Development, and the Municipality of Lepelle-Nkumpi have all received these proposals. The researcher offers twelve (12) suggestions in this regard, as is indicated below.

5.4.1 Recommendations to the cooperatives management

- They should implement appropriate recruitment policies and strategies to leverage the competencies of community members to attract qualified beneficiaries who can assist in expanding cooperatives activities.
- Networks should be established with cooperatives in other communities to share information and knowledge on best practice strategies to ensure cooperative sustainability and increase profit margins through increased market penetration.
- The strategic and operational decision-making process should be open to beneficiaries and communities to improve accountability and transparency and ensure consistency with the principles of good cooperative governance.
- The management of the cooperatives should take advantage of opportunities for in-depth training and further education in the operation of cooperatives in order to increase their chances of running the cooperatives effectively.
- Adequate information and record-keeping mechanisms should be implemented to track and competently respond to decisions made.

5.4.2 Recommendations to the Department of Social Development (DoSD)

- There should be adherence to deadlines for payment of subsidies to cooperatives and elimination of delayed quarterly payments.
- Training programs for cooperative management should be developed, carried out, followed, and assessed for efficacy, with the data gathered acting as a feedback loop to enhance cooperative functionality and operational performance.
- Community development practitioners should constantly monitor the effectiveness of cooperatives' collaboration with communities to enhance accountability and transparency.

5.4.3 Recommendations to the Lepelle-Nkumpi Municipality

- Municipal staff responsible for integrated community development programmes should empower cooperatives to identify their training needs and plan for implementation.
- Technology-related information and tools should be made available to cooperatives in order to help them become more competitive on the national and international markets.
- They should encourage cooperatives to join ICA to ensure compliance with the principles of good governance.
- Opportunities for engagement between the cooperatives and LED/LEDA should be strengthened by the municipality to improve networking at national level for access to open markets.

5.5 AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In light of the study's objectives, further studies can be conducted to examine the characteristics of cooperatives that improve success and failure within the municipality. A determination of the motives underlying the establishment of cooperatives in the municipality can be further explored to determine their impact on cooperative functionality, performance and success. To what extent the established cooperatives conform to the principles of good cooperative management can be further investigated. Factors surrounding the relevant issues of accountability and transparency in decision-making processes within cooperatives can be further explored by other qualitative researchers.

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ANNEXTURES

ANNEXURE A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE FROM TREC (UL)



University of Limpopo
Department of Research Administration and Development
Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa
Tel: (015) 268 3935, Fax: (015) 268 2306, Email:anastasia.ngobe@ul.ac.za

TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

MEETING: 11 May 2021

PROJECT NUMBER: TREC/76/2021: PG

PROJECT:

Title: The Role of Cooperatives in Job Creation and Sustainable Livelihoods:
The Case of Lepelle-Nkumpi Municipality, Limpopo Province
Researcher: LK Mashikinya
Supervisor: Prof T Moyo
Co-Supervisor/s: N/A
School: Turfloop Graduate School for Leadership
Degree: Master of Development Studies

PROF P MASOKO

CHAIRPERSON: TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

The Turfloop Research Ethics Committee (TREC) is registered with the National Health Research Ethics Council, Registration Number: REC-0310111-031

Note:

- i) This Ethics Clearance Certificate will be valid for one (1) year, as from the abovementioned date. Application for annual renewal (or annual review) need to be received by TREC one month before lapse of this period.
- ii) Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved, the researcher(s) must re-submit the protocol to the committee, together with the Application for Amendment form.
- iii) PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES.

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ANNEXURE B: APPROVAL FROM THE LEPELLE-NKUMPI MUNICIPALITY



LEPELLE-NKUMPI LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

Postal Address
Private Bag X07
CHUENESPOORT
0745

www.lepelle-nkumpi.gov.za

Physical Address
170 BA Civic Centre
LEBOWAKGOMO, 0737
Tel : (+27)15 633 4500
Fax : (+27)15 633 6896

Enquiry: C R Mphahlele

Ms. Mashikinya L.D (ID No. 7202230819083)
P O Box 1612
Lebowakgomo
0737

Dear Madam,

**SUBJECT: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY: STUDENT NO.
9306829**

Your letter dated 08 September 2021 bears reference.

Municipality hereby grants you permission to conduct research at Lebowakgomo Township for your Master in Development Planning degree with University of Limpopo as requested. We hope that the research will be conducted with strict adherence to all the human rights and research ethics and that once published, it will also benefit our local community.

Wishing you all the luck in your academic endeavours.

Kind regards,


MANKGA K.G (MS.)
ACTING MUNICIPAL MANAGER

04/01/2022
DATE

MUNICIPAL CALL CENTRE NUMBER: 0800 222 011

"Motho ke motho ka batho"

**Title: The role of cooperatives in job creation and sustainable livelihoods in
Lepelle-Nkumpi Municipality, Limpopo Province**

Dear Participant

I am Nkele Dikeledi Mashikinya, a Master of Development Planning and Management candidate at the Turfloop Graduate School of Leadership and Management conducting a study titled: “The role of cooperatives in job creation and sustainable livelihoods in Lepelle-Nkumpi Municipality, Limpopo Province.” The purpose of this study is to investigate the nature and role that cooperatives play in job creation and sustainable livelihoods. The findings from this study will be used by the researcher to provide recommendations on strategies for improving the efficacy of cooperatives in job creation and sustainable livelihoods in the Lepelle-Nkumpi Municipality, Limpopo Province.

You have been selected to voluntarily participate in this study because of your involvement in the functions of the cooperatives in the local municipality. The nature of your participation in this study will involve consenting to be engaged in an interview which will last for less than an hour regarding the issues relating to the role of cooperatives in job creation and sustainable livelihoods in the Lepelle-Nkumpi Municipality, Limpopo Province. The interviews will be audio-recorded to enable the researcher to conduct transcriptions and analysis of the gathered data. Your responses to the interview questions will be treated with confidentiality. No information shared by you will be linked to your real identity. The research data will be analysed and presented in an aggregated format to protect the identity of the participants. The study has received ethical clearance from the Turfloop Research Ethics Committee. The study findings will be made publicly available through the University of Limpopo Research Repository. Should need further information regarding this study; feel free to contact the researcher on the contact details provided below:

Mashikinya L.D (Principal Researcher)

Mobile: 082 7568 302

Email: mashikinyankele@gmail.com

**ANNEXURE D: LISTS OF COOPERATIVES IN THE LEPELLE-NKUMPI
MUNICIPALITY**

Name of co-operatives	Location	Description
Provision of tourism information	Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipality	Tourist attraction brochure
Protection and promotion of heritage sites	Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipality	Preservation of arts, culture and heritage
Mahlatji Tourism Centre	Mathabatha	Develop a tourism centre
Hospitality facilities	Lebowakgomo and Mafefe	Develop accommodation and hospitality facilities
Lebowakgomo Hydroponic	Lebowakgomo	Crop Farming
Integrated Goat Farming	Ga-Mphahlele	Goat Farming for the purpose of selling living livestock, goat meat and milk
Zebediela citrus juice	Zebediela	Processing of juice
Fresh produce market	Lebowakgomo	Vegetable market & distribution
Lepelle-Nkumpi Agricultural Marketing Project	Municipal wide	Mentoring & capacity building of emerging grain farmers
Chicken abattoir, broiler, chicken farming & processing	Lebowakgomo & Mphahlele	White meat production
Revitalisation of irrigation schemes	Scheming, Tooseng, Malekapane, Makgoba, Maseleseleng, Mokgobolang, Mashadi, Ga-Mampa	Agriculture
Grazing Land for livestock	Mogoto, Tooseng, Mamaolo, Mahlatjane	Livestock farming
Dipping Facility	Tooseng, Malekapane	Livestock farming

Resuscitation of Lebowakgomo hydroponic	Lebowakgomo	Agriculture
Vegetable co-operatives	Tooseng	Crop Farming
Dry Land Projects	Maseleseleng, Madikeleng, Makgolobeng	Agriculture
Ipopeng Disabled Project	Tjiane	Disability
Dithabaneng Best Bakery	Dithabaneng	Bakery
Mphahlele Self Help Bakery Project	Seleteng	Bakery
Makgoathane Bakery Project	Mamaolo	Bakery
Maijane Tsoga oe Tirele Project	Maijane	Not specified
Fanang Diatla Hlagatse Bakery	Marulaneng	Bakery
Sepitsi Broiler farm	Marulaneng	Not Specified
Fahloshang vegetables Primary	Lenting	Vegetable garden
Reafihla Farming Primary Cooperative	Lenting	Farming
Thushanang Lesetsi Bakery	Lesetsi	Bakery
Mafele & Catering	Ngwaname	Bakery & Catering
Fanang Diatla Self-help Project	Ga-Mathabatha	Not Specified

Moletla Batho	Mafefe	Not specified
Re Kgonne Bjang Agriculture	Ga-Mathabatha	Agriculture
Comprehensive	Lebowakgomo	Not specified
Phonemonal woman of God	Mashite	Not specified
Makgadile Agricultural Cooperative	Ga-Ledwaba	Agriculture
Mashite Holofelang Cooperative	Mashite	Not Specified
Folang le Fodise Agricultural Cooperative	Lesetsi	Agriculture
Makotse Bakery and catering	Makotse	Bakery
Youth Centre for Basic information	Seleteng	Not specified
Comprehensive Consulting Primary cooperative	Makotse	Manufacturing and consultancy
Magatle Bakery	Magatle	Bakery
Tlhakano cooperative	Zebediela	Not Specified
Mabyadile Fresh produce vegetables	Zebediela	Vegetables
Makotse Women Bakery	Makotse	Bakery
Basadi Ba Mehlaeng	Mehlaeng	Bakery

Source: (IDP 2016-2017)

ANNEXURE E: PARTICIPANTS INFORMED CONSENT FORM

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY

I, _____ (name of participant), certify that the person who asked me for permission to participate in this study informed me of the nature, procedure, potential benefits and expected disadvantages.

- I have read the study and understood it as it is described in the leaflet or had it explained to me. I have enough time to ask questions and I am willing to participate in the study.
- I am aware that my participation is voluntary and that I can leave at any time without consequences.
- I understand that the results of this study may be included in a research report, journal article, and/or conference proceedings, but unless otherwise noted, my participation will remain private.
- I voluntarily agree to participate in the study and to have the interviews recorded.

Participant _____ Name _____ and
 Signature:.....Date:.....
 Researcher _____ Name _____ and
 Signature:.....Date:.....

ANNEXURE F: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS

1 Demographic information

Gender		Age	
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Educational level		Years of involvement in cooperative/s	
In-service training received		Marital status	
Resident status in the LNM		Type of cooperative involved in	
Position in the cooperative		Date of cooperative establishment	

3. What experiences have you had with your involvement in the cooperative?
4. How would you describe the functions of your cooperative?
4. What role do you think your cooperative plays in creating jobs and sustainable livelihoods?
5. How do you rate the extent to which your cooperative has been able to fulfil its functions or purposes?
6. How do you think you would propose that your cooperative be supported to create jobs and sustainable livelihoods in the municipality?

ANNEXURE G: LANGUAGE EDITOR'S CERTIFICATE

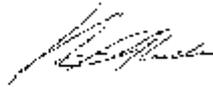
P.O BOX 663
THOLONGWE
0734
12 November 2022

Dear Sir/Madam

This is to certify that the mini-dissertation entitled "The Role of Cooperatives in Job Creation and Sustainable Livelihoods: Lepelle-Nkumpi Municipality, Limpopo Province" by Dikeledi Nkele Mashikinya, student number 9306829 has been edited and proofread for grammar, spelling, punctuation, overall style and logical flow. The edits were carried out using the "Track changes" feature in MS Word, giving the author final control over whether to accept or reject effected changes prior to submission, provided the changes I recommended are effected to the text, the language is of an acceptable standard.

Please don't hesitate to contact me for any enquiry.

Kind regards



Dr. Hlavisomhlanga (BEDSPF-UL, BA Hons-UL, MA-IUP: USA, PhD-WITS, PGDIP-SUN)

Cell number: 079-721-0620/078-196-4459

Email address: hlavisomhlanga@yahoo.com