ASSESSING AND ANALYSING THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: A CASE STUDY OF POLOKWANE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

by

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DECLARATION

I declare that **assessing and analysing the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the effectiveness of public participation: A case study of Polokwane Local Municipality** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged utilising complete references in the text. Furthermore, I declare that this study has not been submitted at any university, college or institution of higher learning for any degree or academic qualification.

...…………………….. ……………………

Signature: **Date:**

MM Mokgwankgwa (Miss)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my Redeemer, Jesus Christ, for allowing me to be alive at this time and for giving me the strength to complete the study. I also dedicate this study to:

- My parents for being my pillars of strength. Without their support, undying love and devotion, I would not be where I am without them;

- My siblings for encouraging and motivating me throughout the academic year;

- My late big brother, Jack, who always showed me the way and showing support in every way and made it a point that I never lost focus on my studies.

ABSTRACT

The study presents findings that emanated from assessing and analysing the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the effectiveness of public participation using Polokwane Local Municipality as a case study. The study argues for the empowerment of communities with knowledge on the available mechanism to fulfil the dream of a culture of participation. This is to increase prospects of a unified perception towards the value of public participation in improving local governance. Local governance accountability can be gauged by the extent to which they practice public participation in decision-making in addressing the challenges of the day.

This is done by putting or encouraging community participation in the processes that would help address the challenges of the day, including the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) processes. The study applied a mixed-methods design and a combination of thematic data analysis and Microsoft Excel (spreadsheet) to analyse the data gathered. Structured questionnaires were distributed to respective community members in the selected community: Ga Dikgale. Furthermore, face-to-face interviews were conducted with the Polokwane municipal officials responsible for the IDP, the municipal manager, and the IDP manager.

The findings of the study showed that public participation during the COVID-19 pandemic was viewed as one of the ways of enabling interaction between local government and citizens through social media platforms. However, citizens faced challenges in the process of public participation, and that impacted their level of public participation. It should, therefore, be borne in mind that to improve local governance, it is necessary to look at the extent to which communities are engaged in the processes of improving local governance. Participation of communities in the development planning of their communities can thus help improve local governance.

Keywords: Service Delivery, Public Participation; Integrated Development Planning (IDP); Service Delivery Planning; COVID-19 Pandemic.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

4IR	Fourth Industrial Revolution
ANC	African National Congress
CDW	Community Development Workers
CoGTA	Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
IDP	Integrated Development Planning
LDP	Limpopo Development Plan
LGSETA	Local Government Sector Education and Training Authority
LGDS	Limpopo Growth and Development Strategy
MFMA	Municipal Finance Management Act
NDP	National Development Plan
NPM	New Public Management
NSDF	National Spatial Development Framework
PGDS	Provincial Growth Development Strategy
SALGA	South African Local Government Association
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
CBO	Community-Based Organisations
WHO	World Health Organization
CDC	Centres for Disease Control and Prevention
ISEM	Informed Social Engagement Approach Theory
LG	Local Government
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
POPI	Protection of Personal Information Act

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

The South African government considers public participation to be the lifeblood of democracy and the effective provision of services (Africa & Yusuf, 2022). In terms of Section 2, the 1996 Constitution of South Africa stipulates that the Constitution is the Supreme law of the country and any action that contravenes it is unlawful and its requirement must be adhered to (Alzuabi, 2016). Public participation is a process that gives people the opportunity to influence government decisions. It has long been an essential part of the democratic decision-making process (Cash & Swatuk, 2017). This constitutional clause requires the government to establish procedures and organisations for public engagement. However, the main objective of public engagement is to ensure that the elements and principles of good governance and legislative compliance are embraced by both government officials and members of the public. Successful public participation is determined by the level of understanding of the public of the participation of the public (Alzuabi, 2016).

The direct participation of the citizens in government decisions is ensured through public participation. According to Apaliyah, Martin, Gasteyer, Keating and Pigg (2012), formal participatory methods are used to promote democracy through an inclusive process called public participation. Apaliyah et al. (2012) further argue that genuine public involvement should include sharing in the rewards of governance and development outputs and outcomes, in addition to participation in decision-making, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

Citizens' direct participation in governmental decisions is ensured through public involvement. According to Alzuabi (2016), formal participatory methods are used to promote democracy through an inclusive process called public participation. Davids (2016) adds that genuine public involvement should include sharing in the rewards of governance and development outputs and outcomes, in addition to participation in decision-making, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted public participation in several municipalities in South Africa and this was exacerbated by inadequate management skills to control the pandemic (Dludla, 2020). The pandemic severely impacted democratic processes such as access gatherings to enable people and organisations to make collective decisions, the ability to share their opinions, and the ability to positively influence democratic processes (Acad, Med, Dubov & Shoptaw, 2020). According to Acad et al. (2020), civil society organisations (CSOs) and the public have rarely been involved in the planning, execution, and evaluation of emergency measures or subsequent laws intended to reduce the spread of COVID-19, including those that resulted in the restriction of civil rights and freedoms (Alhassan, Adedoyin, Bekun & Agabo, 2020).

Currently, South Africa's policy on Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) in local government places a high priority on public participation. According to Mathebula (2016), the democratically elected government of South Africa implemented an Integrated Development Plan (IDP) to strengthen the basis of community involvement in local government issues, including policy and decision-making processes (Alzuabi, 2016). The Municipal System Act 32 of 2000 and other relevant policy frameworks enable active community engagement by requiring municipalities to promote community involvement in areas that affect them. The idea behind public participation is that everyone who will be impacted by a decision should have a say in how it is made (Association for Public Participation, 1990).

Community involvement is important to policy and decision-making processes at the international, national, and local levels (Apaliyah, Martin, Gasteyer, Keating & Pigg, 2018). Although some legal frameworks and policies encourage public engagement, Chinman, Anderson and Goodman (2020) claim that this is often just rhetoric. Taking this into account, it was vital to evaluate and analyse the effectiveness of public participation in COVID-19, especially in the context of the Polokwane Local Municipality.

1.2. Definition of Key Concepts

This section entails definitions of the concepts used and the legislative framework that governs public participation. It further presents the rationale for public participation, factors affecting rural communities' participation in local development planning processes, capacity building programmes, strategies and policies used to improve public participation during the formulation, implementation, and monitoring of local government development plans, as well as the factors considered in designing capacity building programmes to improve the participation of the people staying in rural areas in local development planning.

● **Public Participation**

Public participation plays a prominent role in the municipal process and in ensuring that democratic values are adhered to. It is a procedure that gives people a chance to influence governmental decisions (Chipkin & Lipietz, 2012). It has long been an essential part of the democratic decision-making process (Bherer, Gauthier & Simard, 2017). The origins of citizen participation can be seen in ancient Greece and early New England. Governmental procedures and methods were created before the 1960s to encourage outsider participation (Bricout, Baker, Moon & Sharma, 2021). Participative decision-making process, policy implementation, and programme, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting initiatives are all examples of public participation. According to Bricout, Baker, Moon and Sharma (2021), public participation is the method used to incorporate public values, needs, and concerns into business and decisions taken by the government. It is a two-way interaction with the overarching objective of making better judgments backed by the data.

Lee (2013) is of the view that the legislation governing local government in South Africa makes a provision for municipalities to establish a system of participatory democracy, through which the community can freely express their views regarding issues of development within their wards. There are also various structures, such as Ward Committees at local government

established to ensure the promotion of public participation, and these committees were introduced at the local government level to facilitate public participation and informing municipalities about the needs and challenges in the communities, such as water. Brunette, Klaaren and Nqaba (2019) explain public participation as a two-way communication process between the public and the government through their elected local authorities.

● **Community participation**

Community participation implies the involvement of ward councillors, ward committee members, businesspeople, traditional leaders, and other people in local municipalities in the planning process, including strategies, performance management, as well as project implementation and monitoring. It refers to the participation of the above categories of people in identifying their own developmental needs and prioritising these needs, finding solutions together with the municipality. Bekker (2004:44-45) states the following specific objectives of community participation, which encourage the participants to: provide information to communities, obtain information from and the community, and improve decisions, programmes, projects, and services.

• **Ward**

A ward in this study referred to a small unit of a local authority, such as a neighbourhood or suburb that can elect a ward councillor to represent residents of the respective community on the local authority or municipal council (Brokamp, 2018).

Pandemic

The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared COVID-19 a pandemic due to the rapid mutation of the Coronavirus that spread throughout the world (Makrelov et al., 2020). The Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) claims that pandemics occur when a brand-new virus first appears and spreads quickly from person to person. Due to the pace and

extent of the spread, as well as the lack of political will in some countries to control COVID-19, WHO issued the declaration (Acad et al., 2020).

 • **Consultation**

According to Fourie (2021), consultation involves a process of communication between the government and the governed (community) that is dealing with a public issue. Consultation also refers to the process of seeking information or advice. Consultation between the local government and participants is a two-way process, where each has something that the others want. Therefore, consultation is a form of participation in which information is made available and the opinion of the participants is elicited (Kammerbauer & Wamsler, 2017).

● **Service Delivery Planning**

Service delivery planning entails decision-making and the management of change to reduce uncertainties about public goods such as water, electricity, roads and transport, education and schools, health care and clinics, and so on, all of which have a distinguished potential to affect human dignity (Tsheola, Ramonyai & Segage, 2014:340). As such, service delivery planning is all about people. Hence, there must be a direct relationship between service delivery planning and the need for public participation. Two key principles of democracy ('popular control and political equality') are observed when 'people power' is exercised in its entirety and the community is included in public decision-making (Tsheola et al., 2014).

1.3. Problem Statement

This study was based on the knowledge that in practice, public participation has not been used effectively; rather, it has been used occasionally. Due to the misconception that public participation is mostly rhetorical, government department procedures and norms, which strive to engage the public more, have not really yielded the desired outcomes. As a result, with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa in 2020 and the subsequent

steps to reduce the impacts of the pandemic, there has been a significant decline in public involvement in municipalities.

The government is concerned that increased public participation will make planning and implementation more difficult to oversee, less exact, and take longer overall. Public participation seems to be an afterthought in most development initiatives started by local municipalities. After government decisions are made, community members are frequently consulted. Since their needs and services are not adequately provided, the public becomes frustrated and often loses faith in the local government as a result. During a pandemic, this frequently results in violent demonstrations that spread infection by infection (Arndt, Davies, Gabriel, Harris, Makrelov, Modise, Robinson, Simbanegavi, Seventer & Anderson, 2020).

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 in South Africa and the subsequent lockdown levels that were introduced to mitigate the effects of this pandemic, public participation in municipalities was negatively affected. Public participation forms the most significant legislative principle for good governance in the South African government. It is evident that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the South African public sector in numerous ways, but the tension created by the challenges inclined to public participation in South African municipalities during the pandemic did not gain much attention. Communities were not even aware of the measures that were introduced to facilitate public participation during this difficult period of the COVID-19 pandemic. This matter created fundamental problems for municipalities in South Africa. The challenge is that despite the outbreak of the pandemic, municipalities were expected to ensure that public policy meets its constitutional imperatives and processes (Mofolo, 2021).

According to Liang, Ooi and Wang (2020), the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic did not only present a perfect storm to test the economic and health disaster management apparatus of governments around the world. Indeed, the virus presented human living contradictions in the sense that the virus compelled social distancing, which some can argue that it posed an existential threat to the lifeblood of 'people' as social animals. On the one hand, interpersonal

relationships, congregational interactions, government-to-people, people-to-government, and government-to-government engagement became uncertain, disjointed, and uninspiring. For local government practice, the pandemic amplified the disjuncture in these participatory and human networking spaces. However, on the other hand, the pandemic created a hard reckoning with public participation in mitigating the threats it posed.

Munzhedzi and Phago (2020) highlighted how the COVID-19 pandemic amplified the dysfunction in local government in South Africa, from capacity and skill deficits to transformative stagnation of rural municipalities. The authors proposed a human-centred approach to tunnel through the post-COVID-19 pandemic aggravated dysfunction. It is perhaps fitting that for good governance to thrive after a pandemic that threatened human interaction, a human-centred approach be considered germane.

1.4. AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The following are the aim and subsequent interrelated objectives of the study:

1.4.1. Aim of the Study

This study assessed and analysed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the effectiveness of public participation within the Polokwane Local Municipality.

1.4.2 Objectives of the study

The objectives that helped the study to reach its intended goal were set:

- To evaluate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on public participation effectiveness.
- Identify the challenges of public participation during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Identify the best mechanisms that could enhance successful public participation when there is a disaster such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.5. Research questions

The subsequent research questions that the study aimed to answer were:

● To what extent did the COVID-19 pandemic affect the effectiveness of public participation?

● Which public participation challenges were faced by municipalities during the pandemic?

● Which mechanisms can be adopted to improve public participation when there is a disaster like COVID-19 in the future?

1.6. Limitation of the study

Although public participation has been a key focus of several research publications, it is unclear whether this has led to a change in how public participation at local government has been perceived by leaders in influencing service delivery in municipalities during the recent COVID-19 pandemic. For public participation to be effective in the local government sphere, intervention by political and administrative leadership is required in the short- and long-term to facilitate improvement in the lives of communities.

1.7. Chapter Outline

Chapter 1

Chapter 1, as the introduction, explained the background of the study. It further outlined the problem statement, aim and objectives, research questions and defined the key concepts of the study.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 discussed the theoretical framework of the study.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 provided the literature review and the legislative framework for public participation.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 outlined the research methodology, study area, sampling, and ethical considerations.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 reported on the findings and analysis of the data in the study.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 drew the conclusion, summarised the entire study, considering the discussions, objectives, data collected, and the literature review. Lastly, it provided the study's recommendations.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Introduction

Chapter 1 presented the general introduction of the study, outlining the problem statement, research questions, and objectives. The theoretical framework as discussed in this chapter encapsulates theories related to the subject of the study. This study adopted a conceptual framework of public participation on the COVID-19 pandemic, and this served as an analytical basis for the study. The post-1994 period has been the most crucial and challenging moment for the South African government (Nyalunga, 2006). South Africa has had to struggle and deal with an oppressive, apartheid-induced legacy of inequalities and underdevelopment. Local government has been recognised as a key agent of development in its localities, focusing on the poorest of the poor (Siphuma, 2009). Rowe and Frewer (2014) believe that successful development requires the integration of the successes and compensation for the shortcomings of both top-down and bottom-up planning. Rowe and Frewer (2014) further stress the need for greater empathy and integration between planners and communities and the blending of theory and practice.

Citizenship and public participation are seen as the key to political action in modern societies (Wanki, 2017). Therefore, the study reviewed the theories of public participation. Public participation refers to a set of actions, measures, and efforts, based on a sense of belonging and a concrete activity consumed in the local, regional, national, or international community (Wanki, 2017). In South Africa, public participation is strengthened by joint actions and participation in decision-making. Therefore, perhaps the most important resource that the study could analyse was the South African Citizens' Initiatives (Blomquist, 2020). Studies on public participation revealed three dimensions of civic behaviour: rational choice, social capital, and civic voluntarism (Brady, Chaskin & McGregor, 2020). Access to resources, positive evaluations of the benefits of participation, informal networks, and mobilisation appear to be important links to most types of

civic activism and play an important role in influencing levels of participation, especially in South African municipalities (Kakumba & Nsingo, 2008). Jeffery (2009) asserts that the two overarching objectives of scientific research are to advance knowledge and improve our comprehension of the world in which we live. The discovery of facts and general laws is typically how knowledge grows, whereas the construction of explanations for the knowledge that is discovered and the organisation of knowledge and explanations into systematic generalisations or theories are typically how understanding grows. These theories can be applied to problems, including those in real life, to ensure the application of pertinent actions and to predict and implement reforms. The fact that there is still no precise, easy standard or litmus test for determining whether a theory is scientific or not must be emphasised (Sebola, 2015). It is frequently preferable to base the standard for 'scientificity' on the theory's intended outcomes, which in this study was relevant to the growth of local government (Sebola, 2017)

2.2. Theoretical Framework – Public Participation

The theoretical framework of this study included: Humanistic People-Cantered Theory, Collaborative Planning Theory, Democratic Decision-Making Theory, Theory of New Public Management, Ladder of Citizen Participation Theory, and Rational Decision-Making Theory.

2.2.1 Humanistic People-Centred Theory

The Humanistic People-Centred Theory, which increasingly places the individual and the community at the centre of development, served as the epistemological foundation for this study. People-centred processes help society's members reach their full potential by developing their skills and mobilising local resources to raise living standards in line with their own goals (David, Theron & Maphunye, 2009). People's interests and needs are prioritised in micro-level development thinking, which is the main justification for implementing people-centred development. Since community members should be able to choose, prioritise, lead, and manage their development, service delivery should be people centred.

The latter represents a vehement rejection of both the fragmented technocratic or top-down decision-making process as well as South Africa's colonial and disempowering heritage (Makalela, 2018). The democratic government of today is therefore committed to a development that is people centred. South Africa's development plan, which serves as a framework for socioeconomic policy, emphasises the idea of a people-centred approach as a place to start when addressing the inequities of earlier development initiatives (Makalela, 2018). Public engagement, social learning, empowerment, and sustainability are supported by people-centred development methodologies through their fundamental components (David, Theron & Maphunye, 2009). Service provision ought to be included in the tenets and guidelines of people-centred development as a result.

2.2.2 Theory of Collaborative Planning

The study adopted the orthodox and convincing theory of collaborative planning put forth by Patsy Healey in her book *Collaborative Planning* (1997). In its original form, Healey's theory focused on how members of local communities can influence the development of their shared spaces and define the interests they share through communication, even though they may not share the same cultural background or way of life in other ways (Healey, 1997; Mattila, 2016). By default, collaborative planning is a process for developing public policies and, as such, it is a component of the democratic administration of a particular area (Agger & Löfgren, 2008).

In delivering services, collaborative planning entails government actors collaborating with numerous stakeholders in a variety of ways (Westerink, Kempenaar, van Lierop, Groot, Van Der Valk & Van Den Brink, 2017). According to Ulrich and Wenzel (2019) and Westerink et al. (2017), the distinction between the government's role and that of other societal actors in collaborative planning is not always clear. Instead, it shifts and is frequently contested. In this study, collaborative planning was seen as having two sides: a societal side and a governmental side. According to Coetzee (2001), collaborative planning is an

inclusive, dialogic method for determining how services will be delivered. This method appears to be consistent with some aspects of modern society.

Planning academics and professionals now generally accept the concept of collaborative planning (Kgobe & Mamokhere, 2021). Collaborative planning, in terms of philosophy, rejects Lockean notions of an atomistic man in favour of an Aristotelian conception of man as a political being (Brand & Gaffikin, 2007). Because it focuses on developing an equitable and inclusive institutional framework for deliberation between public and private stakeholders, collaborative planning is frequently cited as one of the most suitable planning theories for communities (Breakfast, Bradshaw & Nomarwayi, 2019). Even though collaborative planning processes typically rely on delegated actors from traditional representative democratic institutions within a specific geographic area and only involve those "stakeholders" who are directly involved in a planning decision, they do not occur outside the framework (Kgobe & Mamokhere, 2021).

Under the current circumstances of lifestyle diversity, collaborative planning theory focuses on how local communities can influence the places they share and define their shared interests through communication (Mattila, 2016). According to Purbani (2017), collaborative planning is a new planning paradigm for a complex modern society that frequently uses consensus-building techniques to mediate disputes between parties. To discover innovative ideas, produce innovative results, and develop institutional capacity through reciprocal understanding, it encourages people to engage in dialogue in an environment of equal empowerment and information sharing (Mauger, 2019). Policymakers may be able to better involve the community through collaborative planning. Due to its justification and supporting evidence, the theory of collaborative planning was pertinent to this investigation. The theory is also in line with South Africa's current legal frameworks. The laws are White Paper on Public Service Delivery Transformation 1997 (Batho Pele principles). The theory is based on the idea of actively engaging the public.

2.2.3 Democratic Decision-Making Theory

Enwereji and Uwizeyimana (2020) explain the Democratic Decision-Making Theory, which the study also adopted. The authors reiterate that the process of citizen involvement is viewed as essential because it strengthens the bond between the public and the government during the decision-making process. The study argues that civic engagement is mandated by law. The Constitution of South Africa 1996 allows for community involvement in municipal policy and decision-making. The constitutional requirements and the expanding secondary literature are in line with the demands of the Democratic Decision-Making Theory (Mamokhere & Meyer, 2022). Because of its theoretical foundations, this theory was regarded as being pertinent to this study. According to the theory, a leadership approach that invites community members to participate in the decision-making process is essential (Holman, 2010).

Democratic leadership, also referred to as participative leadership or shared leadership, is seen by Bhatti, Maitlo, Shaikh, Hashmi and Shaikh (2012) as "a type of leadership style in which group members take a more participative role in the decision-making process." Quick and Bryson (2016) argue that community members play a crucial role as stakeholders in democracies. This is because they are not able to participate directly or indirectly through elected officials in the development, adoption, and execution of laws and policies, such as the IDP, or in the provision of services that have a direct impact on their lives (Mamokhere, 2022). Therefore, a key component of the relationship between the public and the government in democracies is community participation (Mamokhere & Meyer, 2022b). However, the Democratic Decision-Making Theory, is "the opposite of an autocratic style of leadership where the leadership cheerfully dictates the form of management" (Enwereji & Uwizeyimana, 2020).

According to Ulrich and Wenzel (2017), managers agree to equality, equity, fairness, and transparency in the management process under the Democratic Decision-Making Theory. Despite the appearance of openness, democratic decision-making is viewed as complex because it can be difficult to unite people

from different backgrounds and convince them to agree on a single issue (Mamokhere & Meyer, 2022). Despite the complexity of the democratic leadership style, the researcher noted its benefits and drawbacks. The potential benefits of a fair and transparent process are the perception of legitimacy and equity, whereas the potential drawbacks include the vulnerability of communities to political campaigns and a lack of agency in implementing decisions (Mamokhere, 2022). McCallister (2019) describes the democratic decision-making process as a series of steps that include evaluating circumstances, generating alternatives, arranging voting sessions, designating advocates for each alternative, engaging in relevant deliberations with representatives regarding each alternative, and ultimately voting on or consenting to each proposed approach. Quick and Bryson (2016) assert that various stakeholders, including government organisations, political figures, non-profit organisations, and business organisations, participate in community engagement throughout the process of developing or implementing public policies and programmes, as well as IDPs (Mamokhere & Meyer, 2022). In many instances, community participation can be limited to single acts (e.g., a town hall meeting or a citizen survey) or described through a range of practices (e.g., holding public hearings or other types of consultation processes) (Quick & Bryson, 2016).

2.2.4 Theory of New Public Management

The Theory of New Public Management (NPM) was also adopted as a lens for the study. Munzhedzi (2020), who makes the point that NPM is a dominant paradigm in the study of public administration, states that NPM is better explained and promoted. NPM theory seeks to systematically transform conventional public administration to enhance competent and effective governance. Islam (2015) asserts that the goal of the NPM theory is to transform the established or conventional public administration. The theory looks for creative ways to improve public administration and lessen the backlog in service delivery. The theory aims to streamline service delivery by decentralising responsibilities, encouraging public involvement in planning, and updating or reforming existing systems (Maserumule, 2009; Mamokhere, 2022). The NPM supports participatory

governance and is consistent with both the Constitution and democratic decision-making theory. Additionally, Munzhedzi (2021) emphasises the importance of public involvement in municipal affairs for the NPM strategy and how democratic structures and mechanisms support participatory planning.

2.2.5 Ladder of Citizen Participation Theory

The Ladder of Citizen Participation Theory, which Arnstein Sherry created in 1969, was also adopted in the study. The Ladder of Citizen Participation Theory is among the models of democratic citizen participation that is most frequently referenced and widely used (Mamokhere & Meyer, 2022). This theory explains how powerful public institutions and officials rob citizens of their power and how to increase citizen agency, control, and power (Hoffmeyer, 2009). Koma (2012) makes additional claims that citizen participation is a democratic process and that, to be properly categorised as such, it needs to redistribute power. Similarly, Mnguni (2018) defines community participation as including communities in the process of creating policies. This involves determining the necessary services, prioritising budget allocation, and formulating the IDP (Mamokhere, 2022). The theoretical construct of citizen participation comprises a hierarchical structure of a total of eight (8) distinct stages. When important decisions are made, these procedures establish who is in charge. As a result, developing successful community involvement strategies is crucial (Mamokhere & Meyer, 2022). The following eight stages make up Mohajan's (2017) ladder of citizen involvement: Control by the people, delegation, collaboration, mediation, consultation, advice, counselling, and manipulation. The stages proposed by Arnstein were pertinent to this study because they encourage engaged civic participation. In fact, the Polokwane City Council should put Arnstein's theory of citizen participation into practice. Public participation is achieved thanks to the procedures set forth by the citizen participation theory's founder. Ascending from "manipulation, therapy, information, consultation, mediation, partnership, delegation, and citizen control," the Ladder of Citizen Participation Theory is presented. The rungs of the citizen participation model are shown below:

FIGURE 1 LADDER OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

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8    Citizen Control    ⎫
7    Delegation         ⎬  Citizen Control
6    Partnership        ⎭

5    Placation          ⎫
4    Consultation       ⎬  Tokenism
3    Informing          ⎭

2    Therapy            ⎫
1    Manipulation       ⎬  Nonparticipation
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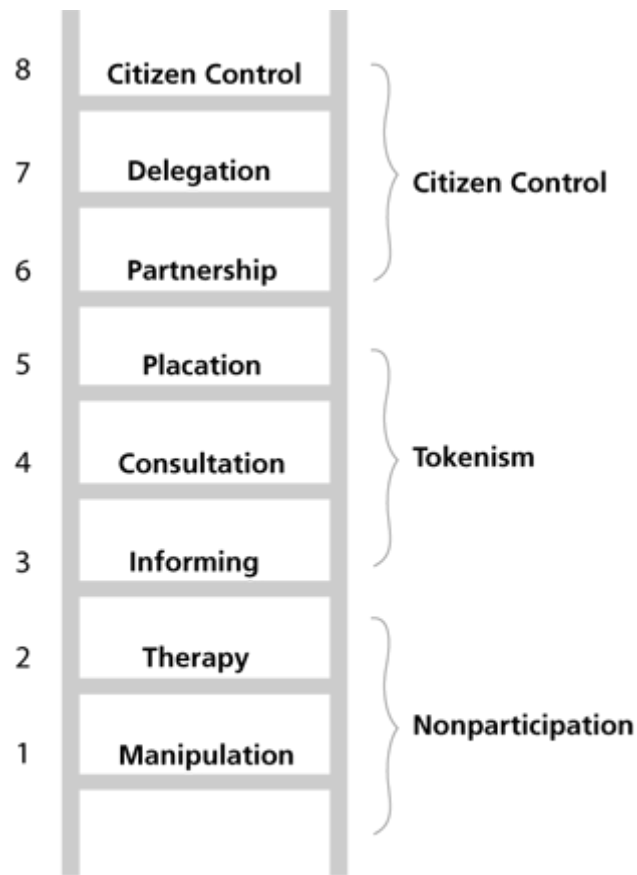
Arnstein's Ladder (1969)
Degrees of Citizen Participation

Source: Arnstein (1969)

The researcher contends that communities should oversee the planning processes (IDP) and, consequently, prioritise services by analysing the stages of Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation. Planning for local government initiatives like service delivery planning may be implemented successfully if the public is given a voice in the process (Mamokhere & Meyer, 2022b). Public participation should be maintained and not just performed for compliance, as in step three (3) of the model above, since it is a legitimacy mandate. Information is the most crucial first step toward legitimate public participation, according to step three. However, far too frequently, the emphasis is on a one-way information flow (Mamokhere, 2022). There is no power to negotiate and no channel for feedback.

Because municipalities frequently fail to give public feedback on municipal issues, it can be argued that step three (3) undermines public participation (Mamokhere & Meyer, 2022). The constitutional requirement to give the public adequate feedback is violated by municipalities. There are "several methods that can be used to provide feedback to communities about the activities of the municipal council and communities in general," according to Rowe and Mokoele (2021). The municipality should refrain from manipulating (step 1) communities, and non-participation. Communities can provide feedback to communities through media announcements, public service announcements, community committees, and community meetings. The goal of encouraging interactive and deliberative participation from the public rather than just seeing it as a compliance measure is to achieve desired outcomes (Kgobe & Mamokhere, 2021).

2.2.6 Rational Decision–Making Theory

Rational Decision-Making Theory, according to Molaba (2016), is a model in which decision-makers weigh various options from various scenarios before deciding. Decision-makers can identify the anticipated scenario for each alternative by weighing these scenarios according to probabilities (Mamokhere, 2022). The final option would be the one with the highest probability of success and the best-expected scenario. In addition, according to Rubinstein (1998), rational decision-making from an economic perspective result in the selection of an alternative after a straightforward three-step process that involves first analysing the alternative's viability, then taking that into account, and finally choosing the best alternative by weighing both viability and desirability (Mamokhere & Meyer, 2022a). People are a key component of this theory of rational decision-making, both as decision-makers and as those who are affected by decisions. According to Meneghetti and Mukwevho (2012), the community's beliefs, values, and behaviours have an impact on how decisions are made. Because public participation entails participation in decision-making, the theory of rational decision-making and the theory of public participation are related. More specifically, the theories of local government are explained in the next section.

2.2.7. Social Capital

Adom, Hussein and Agyem (2018) argue that the social capital model claims that joining and taking part in local organisations assist in fostering a sense of trust and honesty in others. Compared to societies where most citizens do not routinely engage in voluntary activities, societies in which many engage in social and voluntary activities outside the home are more likely to be trusted, well-governed, affluent, and successful. Therefore, levels of political activism in a society must be positively articulated with levels of trust and voluntary activity. However, social capital must be nurtured to flourish and can wither if neglected (Eisenstein, 2019).

2.2.8. Model of Social Capital

The Model of Social Capital has held the idea that joining and participating in local organisations helps to stimulate a sense of trust in others, generating safety, success, wellbeing, etc. (Putnam, 1993). This theory can notice the lack of coagulation at the level of civic engagement in the case of Romanian civil society and the poor results of common and civic actions (Jacobs, 2022). Wide differences in the consolidation of democracy suggest that other factors, such as cultural factors, must also be considered when faced with social capital. Several studies on Romanian civic engagement have indicated a slow evolution to democratic values (Dragoman, 2006).

2.2.9. Public Voluntary

A socio-economic aspect of participation is prominent. In this case, this study is considered highly relevant research on the importance of education in civic involvement: better-educated people, with a high standard of living, from the middle class of society, are more prone to civic participation (Brynard, Cloete & De Coning, 2011). In countries with high civic participation, the study can highlight intense activity in terms of citizen initiative. Citizenship is a central political concept from a theoretical perspective. Active citizenship refers to some collective actions and engagement in society. Active Citizenship-For a Better European Society is a European confirmation that certifies, since 2012, that

active citizenship is the glue that keeps society together (European Economic and Social Committee website). Therefore, active citizenship is a broad concept, crucial to the welfare of society, which means respect for the rule of law, democracy, justice, tolerance, rights, and freedoms of others (Bynard et al., 2011).

Volunteering is an important element of active citizenship, with benefits for volunteers and society at the same time (Greenberg, 2017). The promotion of activism at the European level can also be identified in the launch of Platform Together, which invites people to meet, debate, and act for the development of Europe (Platform Together website) (Grahame et al., 2020). Additionally, European Youth Ideas is a platform designed as a link between young people and the European Parliament. In this case, we can note the opportunity for young people to actively participate in European democratic life. All these actions are signs of the need and desire to involve citizens at the European level. It is a reality that in all European societies, digital activism has started to play an increasingly important role in mass mobilisation (Greenburg, 2011)**.**

The civic voluntarism model is based on a socio-economic model of participation. Resources are significant in participation, meaning that the better educated, more affluent, and more middle-class people are, the more likely they are to participate (Ayodele & Abiodum, 2015). However, civic voluntarism extends the socioeconomic model in several important respects. In Civic Voluntarism, resources are widely conceptualised, including not only economic and educational resources, but also resources of time (Pattie et al., 2003). Many people are so busy that they have time constraints to engage in political activism. Second, as in the rational choice model, the citizen's sense of efficacy is important. The more people feel their opinions and actions are likely to have an influence on the outcome of decisions, the more likely they are to engage in political action (Brynard et al., 2020). Third, the civic voluntarism model stresses the importance of general participation in the political system. Identifying parties and political participation should encourage civic participation. Finally, it is stressed that both politicians and members of the community must adhere to the importance of mobilisation (Eisenstein, 2019). Even when people are resource-

rich, have plenty of free time, and have a strong sense of efficacy, they may still fail to participate if they are unaware of the significance of their participation or if no one has tried to elicit their cooperation (Ayodele & Abiodum, 2015. Being asked to participate in civic participation by other people is an important catalyst for individual participation.

For instance, local campaigning by political parties can play a vital role in mobilising the vote (Pattie et al., 2003). The models have limitations. For example, the Social Capital Theory has limitations such as fostering behaviour that worsens rather than improves economic performance; acting as a barrier to social inclusion and social mobility; dividing rather than uniting communities or societies; facilitating rather than reducing crime, education underachievement, and health-damaging behaviour. Social capital can become a constraint to individuals' actions and choices (Brynard et al., 2020).

2.2.10. Informed Social Engagement Approach (ISEM) Theory

The theory of social capital is centred on multiple approaches. Bourdieu and Coleman were considered its founding theorists since they introduced the term capital systematically for the first time simultaneously. Capital is considered as the existing backlog in material form (Pattie et al., 2003). The accumulation work itself is time-consuming, but it is worth the effort because the capital produced by this work is beneficial and even grows while reproducing. Consequently, social capital is a type of capital that is derived and is considered inherent in the maintenance of social relations and provides useful support when needed (Eisenstein, 2019). Stable relationships generate honour and reputation among its members. They also refine and maintain trustworthiness. Membership in a group provides security and status; the relationships between group members are based on material and or symbolic exchanges. These exchanges reinforce existing relationships and can be used for the provision of social warranty (Garca-Cabrero et al., 2016). Garca-Cabrero et al. (2016) initiated the concept of social capital from the perspective of the theory of rational choice. He contended that social interdependence arises between people because they are interested in events and resources controlled by others with the intention of maximising their

utility and rationally choosing the best solution for them. The establishment of permanent social relationships, such as relations of authority or trust, results in acts of exchange and transfer of control.

The ISEM Theory considers that students who are taught to think critically and reflectively about history, civic issues, and ethics will be able to deal with analogous incidents, both in school and in society (Mosotho, 2013). The author of this model argues that informed social reflection is deduced from the intersection of civic orientation, ethical awareness, and historical understanding. The construct of informed social reflection has recently evolved into the "Informed Social Engagement framework (Ayodele & Abiodum, 2015). The development of this framework is a work in progress, in which the main objective is to integrate three competencies that are evidence analysis, empathy capacity, and sense of agency with three epistemological content domains that are ethical, civic and historic in the assessment of informed social participation. This is a construct that the authors have identified as critical for the development of active and constructive citizens in a democratic society (Jarso, 2017). To become socially engaged citizens in a democratic society, young people must have analytical skills to be able to analyse information from different sources and make informed decisions using critical judgment, care for their well-being and that of others, known and unknown, and feel capable and motivated to address issues affecting their own and others' lives. Describe three alternative theories of civic behaviour, which are rational choice, social capital, and civic voluntarism (Bikam & Chakwizira, 2014).

2.3. Key themes theories of participation

2.3.1. Legitimacy

The potential benefits of participation are realised when the process goes well, but often not. Despite a great deal of practical knowledge and research, stories abound of participation failures (Blomquist, 2020). Legitimacy is one of the most contested features of public participation, typically expressed in terms of the

adequacy of participation or representation, the technical or political workability of the decision outcomes, and the procedural fairness of the process (Sebola, 2017). When public participation is not seen as legitimate, it can alienate the public from government and disrupt policy decisions. The way legitimacy is accomplished and evaluated can be viewed through multiple theoretical lenses. One commonly used in discourse about deliberative democracy is about the quality of the exchange, namely, that legitimate participation requires that the participants explain themselves clearly, use logical arguments, and utilise valid criteria for evaluating options (Setlalentoa, 2017).

Another relates to the legitimacy of the policy outcomes, meaning ascertaining whether the decisions fulfil criteria for good policy, such as equity, efficiency, or technical implement ability. Indeed, one of the compelling reasons for public participation is to ensure that government policy and programme choices are legitimate in terms of being acceptable to and addressing the needs of the public (BMP & Segun, 2017). Another theoretical lens for understanding legitimacy is related to the quality of the process. Procedurally just and procedurally rational processes are likely to be of high quality. Procedural justice refers to whether or to what extent the process embodies democratic values such as fairness, transparency, attention to stakeholders' concerns, and openness to public input. A procedurally just process is presumed to increase the acceptability of the decisions reached. Procedural rationality involves collecting, analysing, and using information that is relevant to the decision (Collins, Neal & Neal, 2014).

The presumption is that procedural rationality will help assure that final choices are substantively rational, meaning that they make sense on many grounds, including, for example, technical, administrative, legal, ethical, and stakeholder support criteria. Process legitimacy is also connected to trust (Youmatter, 2019). Trust is problematic in any process involving people with diverse interests and levels of power, but, when diverse voices are included and power is managed so that potentially marginalised groups do influence outcomes, there are strong payoffs for the legitimacy of the process, the quality of decisions, and effective decision implementation (Youmatter, 2019). Stakeholders are more likely to accept a decision that they believe was produced in a procedurally just manner,

even when it is not their individually preferred outcome. This enhanced buy-in to decisions can limit delays, mistakes, and lawsuits during project and policy implementation. Conversely, the interested public will be unsatisfied and may even protest vehemently if the participation process seems perfunctory, tokenistic or manipulative. For example, public hearings are the most ubiquitous form of public participation and serve an important purpose of transparency and accountability in governance (Yang et al., 2021).

2.3.2. Diversity and Inclusion

Leaving the public out of decision-making is an example of tensions regarding inclusion in and exclusion from governance (Bhengu & Mkhize, 2022). A key challenge in participation is ensuring an appropriate range of interests is engaged in the process, including those normally excluded from decision-making by institutionalised inequities. All too often, supposedly participatory processes end up including the usual suspects, people who are easily recruited, articulate in the language and logic being used to make decisions, and reasonably comfortable in public arenas. Indeed, most public participation is not inclusive: It does not involve deliberation and creating new understandings together but rather is oriented to consulting with the public to gather input (International Association for Public Participation, 2014) or just allowing people to express different perspectives. Stakeholder analysis and the active management of conflict and power are thus needed to ensure that underrepresented and marginalised groups are at least considered and may have a place at the table (Adeyemo, 2011).

Practitioners and scholars raise questions, however, about the impact for inclusion and diversity of the recent valourisation of deliberative, collaborative, and consensus-oriented approaches to public participation. Depending on how conflict and power are managed, participation can enhance the influence of marginalised groups and provide a robust container for negotiation among differences. Conversely, dissent may be silenced even while the sponsors of a process claim legitimacy by adopting the veneer of a participatory approach (Young, 2000; Bulkeley & Mol, 2003). Inclusion and exclusion are often used in reference to the ethnic, racial, gender, or socioeconomic diversity of the people

taking part in public participation (Ouduor, 2023). This locates the focus of diversity on the status of the people participating in a participation process. It may also be associated with concerns about the representativeness of the people participating, for example, in terms of their socioeconomic diversity, relative to the people who have a stake in the policy decision (Adom, Hussein & Agyem, 2018). A complementary theoretical lens reconceptualises inclusion as a practice of engaging a diversity of perspectives to discover new understandings of problems, resources, and options. In this view, inclusion involves active negotiation among differences in perspectives, identities, institutional boundaries, or issue definitions (Brady et al., 2020).

2.3.3 Expertise and Participation

Including a variety of perspectives in decision-making through public participation often agitates concerns about whether substantively rational outcomes can be attained and legitimated. Many concerns centre on the nature and proper place of expertise in governance. Policy making typically privileges what Scott (1998) and Yanow (2004) characterise as expert (i.e., certified, specialised, decontextualised, codified) knowledge overlay (i.e., locally specific, experiential, context-based), knowledge in one view; giving the public influence over choices traditionally left to those with specialised expertise may produce poor outcomes. For example, involving residents in deciding how to address a traffic congestion problem may give currency to options that civil engineers would consider unsafe, too costly, or technically infeasible. Public participation may also provide a platform for well-resourced "not-in-my-backyard" (NIMBY) advocates who oppose policies or programmes (e.g., group homes or affordable housing) that the greater public needs (King et al., 1998). However, it is important to acknowledge that the empathetic, experiential understandings that are expressed through public participation introduce important knowledge and values into decision-making processes and can provide a vehicle for important public participation).

2.4 Theoretical Framework – Local Government

The attempt to create a theory of local government was motivated by the need to address some important issues, such as why the local government exists. There have been several schools of thought that have developed various theories of local government, according to Makinde, Hassan and Taiwo (2016). There are three of them: Development, Efficiency-Service School, and Democratic-Participatory School. The theoretical issue of what local governments ought to do has been addressed by these schools of thought (Chukwuemeka, Ugwuanyi, Ndubuisi-Okolo & Onuoha, 2014).

2.4.1 Democratic Participatory School of Thought

The Democratic Participatory School holds that the local government exists to promote democracy and create opportunities for political participation, as well as to educate and socialise local citizens (Nzimakwe & Mpehle, 2012). The ideology of this educational institution is based on the principles of utilitarianism as espoused by John Stuart. According to Stuart, a representative government is the most effective form of governance as it fosters the values of liberty, equality, and fraternity. Additionally, it encourages individuals to prioritise their immediate interests while also acknowledging the legitimate demands of others. Furthermore, it promotes political education, participation, and communication (NOUN, 2012). The school of democratic participation posits that local governance constitutes a fundamental component of democracy, serving as a manifestation of democracy's inherent principles, independent of the specific services it delivers. The governmental level that exhibits the highest degree of consultation and participation is the local level. According to the Democratic Participation School, a crucial aspect of local government in a democratic society is its ability to facilitate the exchange of political activities. Internalising the ideals of democracy can be beneficial. The topic of discussion pertains to the concept of democracy. Local governments have increasingly served as a platform for grooming political elites who aspire to advance to higher levels of government.

Local governments offer not only avenues for political engagement but also serve as a platform for honing political skills that can be leveraged at the state or national level. The significance of local governments in the democratic process is highlighted by Jaakkola (2020). Jaakkola (2020) asserts that the optimal functioning of democracy is achieved when ordinary citizens are able to elect their representatives at the grassroots level and ensure that they are answerable to them. The author additionally observes that the level of democratisation within local governance has a significant impact on the potential for enhanced democratic governance at the state or national level. Jaakkola (2020) further argues that the establishment of democratic structures and values at the local government level is crucial for the successful implementation of democracy. Jaakkola (2020) suggests that without such structures and values, democracy would be deficient in other areas. The fundamental attributes of democracy, namely, accountability, transparency, and effective representation, can be achieved to a greater degree at the local government level. The establishment of local governments is primarily driven by the aspiration to manifest unique identities through smaller, directly responsible political entities that can effectively address the immediate local requirements of the populace (Koma, 2012). The necessity for this is also explicitly stated by Mabeba (2021). The enhancement of democracy is significantly facilitated by the presence of local self-government. The objective of this approach is to enhance democracy by promoting representative and participatory governance, while also facilitating the involvement of underrepresented minorities and disadvantaged segments of society. According to Chukwuemeka et al. (2014), local governance facilitates self-governance of smaller government units that are accountable to their constituents through direct democratic means. The proximity of citizens to elected representatives, as is the case in local governments, makes it easier for citizens to hold elected representatives accountable for their performance in office.

Similarly, participatory democracy is more readily implemented in local areas, allowing the community to identify more closely with its political institutions and fostering a sense of ownership of common resources. In this vein, Oviasuyi and

Dada (2010) assert that citizen participation in governance, especially in rural and grassroots areas, is more easily achieved in the context of local government.

2.4.2 Efficiency Services School of Thought

In contrast, the Efficiency Services School posits that the primary role of local government is to provide efficient service delivery. Accordingly, the success of local government should be evaluated based on its ability to provide services that conform to national standards (Oyo, Maiga & Muyinda, 2018). The educational institution posits that the concept of democratic participation cannot be universally applied to all political systems, and that it is erroneous to view local governance as a platform for fostering civic education and democratic principles. According to their argument, the regional arena has limited capacity to generate leaders of national significance. According to NOUN (2012), local politics has a greater tendency to uphold specific and limited interests rather than promoting a comprehensive comprehension of democracy. The fundamental proposition of the efficient service theory posits that the foremost objective of municipal governance is to furnish services to the community members, owing to its optimal capacity for dispensing locally tailored services. Advocates contend that the proficient provision of certain regional amenities is of such great significance that an alternative entity would need to be established if local governance was absent, thereby suggesting that local governance is essential.

According to Pacione (2019), the primary contention of the efficient service delivery school is that the local government has a responsibility to facilitate efficient service delivery. Certain academics assert that this obligation is of such significance that it should be prioritised above all other duties of municipal administration. They contend that the objective or purpose of fostering democratic engagement is not as crucial as the objective of effective provision of services. Advocates of the efficient service model contend that a reduction in democratic participation in the governing process is acceptable if local or grassroots constituents receive proficient services from their respective municipal authorities. According to Perlaviciute and Squintani, (2020), the significance of the local government as a defender of liberty, or at the very least as a supporter

of democracy, has been acknowledged. However, its function as a service provider has not garnered the same level of enthusiasm. According Phago (2009), the provision of certain services can be carried out with greater efficiency by local government due to its proximity to the relevant area, as compared to the state or central government. Indeed, in certain instances, the utilisation of local government as a conduit for the implementation of policies and programmes from the central or state government may prove to be more effective. Broadly speaking, certain functions that prove to be unwieldy for the state or federal government may be more effectively and conveniently executed by the local government. The functions encompass the gathering of taxes, issuance of radio and television licenses, and registration of vital events such as births, deaths, and marriages. Phutiagae (2014) asserts that the proximity of local government to the populace enhances the likelihood of effective translation of community preferences into suitable policies and programmes.

Indeed, decisions and development programmes made at the local level are often more practical and sustainable because they recognise and consider the local diversity and historical complexity that may exist in a particular place. Under these circumstances, the provision of local public goods and services is more likely to reflect local tastes and preferences (Poncian & Jose, 2019). Given that not all problems are central in nature, it is up to the people in the area where the problems are most felt to decide how to address them. Local government is the best framework for this. Local government also provides a good basis for effectively mobilising popular support and resources for government projects and programmes. For example, local governments can generate revenue internally and use it, along with funds provided to them by the state and federal governments, to improve the lives of people within their sphere of influence (Poncian & Jose, 2019).

2.4.3 Development School of Thought

The developmental school sees local government as a system that can bring about political integration in developing societies that are ethnically pluralistic and diffuse. Where local sentiments and local ties are extraordinarily strong, local

governments can use them positively to promote national growth (Purbani, 2017). The school believes that local government becomes an instrument for national awareness and consciousness at the expense of overemphasising its local characteristics. According to Purbani (2017), the implementation of this approach has the potential to foster initiative, incentivise drive and experimentation, recognise pre-existing local skills, interests, and abilities, and cultivate them for the collective benefit. According to Purbani (2017), it is possible to incorporate thr schools' perspectives into a practical theory of local governance. According to this perspective, the fundamental and applied objectives of local governments are to advance democratic principles, encourage political engagement, foster national unity, facilitate economic progress, and offer safeguarding and logistical amenities. According to the development school of thought, it is believed that the role of local governments should be to act as facilitators of development. The theories, which emerged from developing nations, aim to establish the role of local governments as developmental agents (Adeyemo, 2012).

Again, decentralisation or devolution of government powers to local government provides opportunities for local or grassroots people to participate in the development process. Decentralisation can harness the creative energy of the people. Again, decentralisation provides subnational units with the opportunity to innovate and experiment (Agger & Löfgren, 2008). Innovative policies and practices in one local government can be modified and replicated in others, as well as adopted by the state or national government. Also, the existence of local governments helps to relieve the government at the centre, thus freeing the national leadership from burdensome details and unnecessary interference in local affairs (Alvi, 2016). Anderson, (2017) points to the need for the establishment of local governments: Local governments provide opportunities for local people to participate in local decision-making and local action within the framework of general national policy and to act as local centres of initiative for development.

Local governments, which are closer to the people and therefore have a better knowledge of people's local needs, are expected to be able to initiate and implement local projects and programmes and motivate people to actively

participate in public affairs (Saalah & Stanely, 2011). It follows that the basic requirement for the creation of local government is development. This is because promoting democratic participation and providing efficient and effective social services are aimed at development (Tony, 2011). Indeed, they all aim to improve the social or economic lives of people at the grassroots or local level. It should be noted that all the local government services discussed are not only of local importance. All the services that are at the core of local government activities are of national importance. For example, health, education, water supply, and roads are of national importance. As Adeyemo (2011) notes, a neglect of any of these areas in one part of the country translates into disease, ignorance, and poor communication nationwide. Given this, we can assume that the development role of local government is valued in the overall national development effort. In this regard, the functional importance of local government seems so compelling that if it did not exist, something else would have to be created in its place. As Antwi and Hamza (2015) note, local governments are the basic tissue of the human body, and without them, the system of government would have no vitality.

2.5. Future directions for theories of participation in governance

The researcher named several key theoretical concerns regarding public participation in governance relating to legitimacy, inclusion, the proper role of expertise, and the challenge of designing participation processes (Bikam & Chakwizira, 2014). These are actively negotiated issues in all contexts of democratic governance. Because democratic governance is traditionally defined as occurring by, for, and with the public, the boundaries between public agencies, elected officials, and the public are inherently complex and contested. Many anxieties about the practice and theory of public participation are related to how democratic governance is conceptualised and how it affects the nature of participation (Bikam & Chakwizira, 2017).

This is especially important in polities, such as the United States, which are characterised by significant inequalities, sharply divided public opinion on many issues, intensely partisan politics, powerful organised interests, and numerous

veto points built into the system (Jacobs, 2014). Regarding participation in governance, the study emphasised the value and necessity of revisiting and reemphasising these old themes. Despite participation becoming a routine part of government policy-making, there is nonetheless a growing sense that the government is unresponsive or not representative of many segments of the public or perhaps even the majority (Mann & Ornstein, 2012; Jacobs, 2014).

Racial minorities and the poor continue to feel disciplined by policies in which they are central stakeholders, and which are ostensibly intended to empower them (Soss et al., 2011; Alexander 2012; Moynihan et al., 2015). The societal concerns about inequality and exclusion that animated the push to public participation in the 1960s are still with us today, meriting renewed focus on the relationship between participation in processes of governance and personal, group, or societal inclusion, empowerment, and equality (Mosotho, 2013). The study recommends two areas where theory development is particularly needed. "The first relates to how much participation is desirable and workable". The rapid rise in the popularity of collaborative governance could be misread as meaning that it is a good or easy solution and instead cautioned that it is a hard solution to a hard set of problems. Similarly, public participation is not easily accomplished and may not always be appropriate. As noted, the move to incorporate design thinking frameworks into governance processes (Cowan, 2012), offers a new lens for considering how to accomplish participation well for particular settings (Bryson et al., 2013).

Participation is a particularly wise route to policy-making when it is legally required or when it is the only or most efficacious way of gaining one or more of the following: needed information, political support, legitimacy, or citizenship development (Thomas, 2012). The second relates to the implications of increasingly diffuse governance systems for opportunities for public participation. These include the move to contract with nongovernmental entities to provide public services through the New Public Management, the "Big Society push in the United Kingdom to relocate government services to communities and volunteers (Kisby, 2010); decentralisation efforts in the developing world and the European push toward the "coproduction" of public services in decentred networks involving

many nongovernmental entities. These movements are leading many observers to speak of the new public service.

The New Public Governance (Osborne, 2010; Morgan & Cook, 2014) or public value governance (Bryson et al., 2014) is a necessary approach to governing and managing effectively in a shared-power world. This changed nature of governance may well enhance opportunities for public participation in shaping public policies and implementation. At the same time, however, these shifts have raised concerns about where and how public participation can occur to ensure the accountability, transparency, and responsiveness of these governance actors.

2.6. Problems with democratic theory, governance, and liberty

Dahl (2003) saw that there is no single theory of democracy, only theories. Therefore, the point of departure is controversy and uncertainty in describing democracy and its derivatives in discourse. Sen (2004) believes that democracy as a subject has become particularly muddled because of the way that rhetoric has been used. He adds that there is a dichotomy between those who want to impose democracy in non-Western countries and those who are opposed to it. The idea of imposition is an explicit assumption that democracy is a Western idea, originating and flourishing only in the West. Similarly, governance is also a disputed concept in the discourse.

There is agreement that improved governance is important for growth and poverty reduction, but little consensus on how to achieve it (Institute for Development Studies, 2006). Research around the future state highlights the fact that effective public institutions are evolving through political processes of bargaining between the state and organised groups in society. There is therefore a lesser focus on formal institutions compared to informal arrangements and relationships in society; hence, the notion of social capital (Institute for Development Studies, 2006).

The critical concept of freedom, which is central to any form of democratic practice, is one of the most disputed concepts in political philosophy and beyond (Barnbeck, 2006). The idea of freedom cannot be taken for granted in policymaking and legislative arrangements. The Sen Capability approach and Berlin's pluralist conception of freedom are important for the discussion. Sen (2015) theorises that development is a process of expanding the real freedoms of people. In this approach, expansion of freedom is viewed as both the primary end and the principal means of development.

The constitutive role and the instrumental role of freedom in development relates to the importance of substantive freedom in enriching human life (Sen, 2015). The substantive freedoms include elementary capabilities like being able to avoid starvation, undernourishment, escapable morbidity, and premature mortality, as well as the freedoms that are associated with being, inter alia, literate and numerate, enjoying political participation and uncensored speech (Sen, 2015). The critical role of instrumental freedom is to determine in what manner different kinds of rights, opportunities, and entitlements contribute to the promotion of human freedom and development. The following types of instrumental freedoms must in necessity promote development, which is, political freedoms, economic facilities, social opportunities; guarantees of transparency and protection of security (Sen, 2015).

Sen (2015) distinguishes between positive and negative freedom and argues that different concepts of freedom have been used and abused in the formulation of political doctrines and ideologies. Freedom is in reality determined by the extent of obedience a state can legitimately demand from its citizens, leading them to distinguish between positive and negative freedom. Negative freedom is concerned with the area in which a person can act unobstructed by other people. Other people circumscribe freedoms, thereby coercing the individual. Positive freedom is about that area in which an individual has control over his/her actions and the outcomes of their actions, i.e., the individual governs himself/herself.

2.7. Conclusion

This chapter examined the theoretical approaches to the developmental local government concerning public participation and service delivery that complemented the theoretical framework for the study. The following development theories were explained and adopted for this study: Humanistic Theory, which focuses on people, Collaborative Planning Theory, Democratic Decision-Making Theory, New Public Management Theory, Citizen Participation Theory, and Rational Decision-Making Theory. The local government theories that were adopted and explained are Democratic-Participatory School, Efficiency-Service School, and Development School.

These schools of thought have addressed the theoretical question of what local governments should do in the governance and management of local municipalities to ensure their efficient service delivery to the societies. The chapter reveals that local government is a complex sphere of government that is also closer to the people. The Polokwane Local Municipality should put the society at the forefront during municipal planning and coordination of the IDP to ensure that local government delivers the critical needs of the society governed. All the theories used in this study fit well together because of their valid arguments and their contribution to the existing and growing body of knowledge. All the theories call for responsible authorities and agencies to allow for active public participation. The next chapter provides a review of the literature on public participation on the COVID-19 pandemic context of South Africa.

CHAPTER 3: CONTEXTUALISATION OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ON COVID 19 PANDEMIC

3.1. Introduction

A review of the literature on public engagement and service delivery planning is presented in this chapter, with the planning sector being one of the areas where this shift is most noticeable. According to the social sciences, early involvement and other essential concepts are critical for successful public participation (Mnisi & Selelo, 2021). Additionally, it comprises giving people the chance to participate in the decision-making process when all options are still feasible and true, which implies allowing people to influence the final decision (Mnisi & Selelo, 2021). Involving the public in the decision-making process is the aim of participatory activities.

Citizen participation is the process by which the concerns, needs, and values of the public are incorporated into government and business decision-making. It is a two-way communication and interaction with the overall goal of making better decisions that are shared by the public (Creighton, 2005; Manaf, Mohamed & Lawton, 2012). To this end, Chapter 28 of Agenda 21 refers to the significant role of local government, recognises the need for local leadership, and emphasises the participation of local governments and their stakeholders in developing local solutions (Liang & Wang, 2020). At the local level, public participation has therefore focused on the allocation of resources to competing groups, particularly concerning infrastructure and basic services.

However, because local governments do not operate as independent entities, it is also important to consider how they are affected by changes in local, provincial, and national policies and programmes (Lichfield, 2021). Citizen participation refers to the involvement of citizens in administrative functions and decision-making, which is achieved through the availability of various mechanisms in different functional areas and through participation in the decision-making process.

The chapter provides a review of existing literature on public participation during the recent COVID-19 pandemic in influencing services delivery within the three spheres of the government. The literature assisted in assessing how previous researchers have tackled the issue of public participation as part of the programmes at the local government level to influence, among others, service delivery.

The chapter also elaborated on opportunities and challenges of public participation programmes in influencing service delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is of great significance and beneficial to review existing literature on the research topic because knowledge from secondary data, such as textbooks, journals, is useful in understanding effective public participation programmes or mechanisms that will influence service delivery in rural communities and within municipalities.

3.2. History of local government in South Africa

According to the White Paper on Local Government, 1998, apartheid has left its imprint on South Africa's human settlements and municipal institutions (Kakumba & Nsingo, 2017). However, apartheid was not the beginning of geographic, institutional, and local segregation at the local level because segregation already existed prior to the establishment of apartheid in 1948 (Friedman, 2021).

With the advance of the Group Areas Act, a strict residential segregation and compulsory removal of black people to group areas were instituted. Through spatial separation, influx control, and a policy of own management for own areas, apartheid maintained a limit to the extent to which affluent white municipalities would bear the financial burden of servicing disadvantaged black areas (Berry & Glaeser, 2020). This was achieved with the restriction of the permanent residential presence of black people in urban areas, through the pass system, and the preservation of a viable municipal revenue base for white areas by separating townships, industrial, and commercial development (Page & Meyer, 2018). The Local Government Transition Act, Act 209 of 1993, mapped out the following three phases of transition:

3.2.1 The Pre-Interim Phase

The pre-interim phase prescribed the establishment of local forums to negotiate the appointment of temporary councils, which would govern until municipal election. Established councils were specifically trusted with a mandate to lead the transition (De Visser, 2017).

3.2.2 The Interim Phase

The interim phase was classified by municipal elections and lasted until a new local government system was designed and legislated. At this stage, the system of local government was effectively de-racialised through the amalgamation of former racially based structures (De Visser, 2017).

3.2.3 The Final Stage

The final stage was characterised by the establishment of a new local government system. This stage has seen the establishment of municipalities as promulgated by the local government: Municipal Structures Act, Act 117 of 1998 (Kakumba & Nsingo, 2017).

3.3. Provincial Growth Development Strategies

Since 2004, the Limpopo Provincial Government has developed and implemented the Provincial Growth and Development Strategies (PGDSs) (Tshisevhe, 2017). The rationale behind the development of the PGDSs is to create a vision for the development of the province that reflects a growth and development path. However, such a vision should be informed by the national development agenda. At the heart of the PGDSs is public participation, which helps align the NDP with society's needs for government.

To implement and realise the vision, priorities, and programmes, the PGDSs should be implemented by various actors, institutions, and structures within the policy environment. As per the report by DPLG (2005), the provinces hold significant importance in providing context to the national requirements and

grounding them in the certainties and specificities of each province. Additionally, they also provide guidance to communities in the planning and execution of diverse community projects and programmes, such as the IDP, to facilitate their development. These encompass governmental bodies at the provincial and municipal levels, among others. As a result, the provincial administration has taken measures to reinvigorate and reinforce pre-existing establishments, as well as establish novel ones, with the aim of executing the PGDSs across all governmental domains. According to Tshisevhe (2017), the key determinants of success for these institutional arrangements are inclusive planning, inter-organisational teamwork, and coordination with external non-governmental entities such as private enterprises and civil society groups.

The state's incapacity to meet the demand for services can be attributed to the inadequate capacity of several state institutions to effectively address the needs and circumstances that delineate their respective domains of operation. The delivery of public services is defined by new policy frameworks, structures, and transformational demands, while state institutions must also respond to the dynamic circumstances of citizens. Both establish a framework for the organisational milieu that necessitates perpetual adaptation, restructuring, and evolution to align with the exigencies of service delivery demands (Mafunisa & Tsanwani, 2011).

3.4. Limpopo Growth Development Strategies

3.4.1. Limpopo Development Plan (LDP)

The LDP seeks economic development and transformation to enable the province to address the triple challenges: Poverty, inequality, and unemployment. The LDP's main economic agenda is to intensify job creation and improve the province's skills base to support the province's socio-economic growth and development. The province aims to diversify the economy by focusing on manufacturing industries to create value along commodities with competitive advantages within prioritised economic sectors to offset job losses and promote sustainable employment opportunities (Value Chain Development Clusters). The National Spatial Development Plan (NSDP) provides a framework for

development planning and alignment between national plans, provincial growth, and development strategies, and IDPs (Makalela, 2019).

According to the LGDS of 2004, it is imperative that the challenges faced are addressed within the constitutional powers of the provinces. According to the Local Government Development Strategy (LGDS) of 2004, the LGDS is a hybrid of both top-down planning initiatives, which encompass a wider provincial outlook that extends to districts, and bottom-up planning projects, which consist of IDP projects and programmes. It is imperious that integrated district and municipal development planning involve both national and provincial departments. The involvement of provincial and municipal entities in development planning is crucial in establishing a shared comprehension of development policies, strategies, and trajectories (Koma, 2012; Makalela, 2019). The interactions are intended to enhance the recognition of district and local governments as key agents responsible for the execution of national and provincial development objectives. According to Makalela (2019), the LGDS serve as a means for district and local government to communicate with the PGDSs during the iterative planning phase.

3.5. Public participation within the South African local government context

Many South Africans' basic requirements were not met under the apartheid system. Public participation is an integral part of planning, service delivery, and performance management is the fundamental component of the new local government system (Government Gazette, 2000). Municipalities are driven by development through service delivery and poverty reduction (Patterson, 2019). In democratic South Africa, public participation plays an important role in ensuring that local municipalities fulfil their developmental obligation.

The literature on public participation in South Africa confirms its role as the key aspect of the nation's participatory democracy. It is supported by Section 152(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA, 1996), particularly Section 152(1)(a)(g), which establishes a policy in line with the ideals of

accountable and participatory governance, accountability, transparency, and group action. The Municipal Structures Act (No. 117 of 1998), Section 44 (3) (g), which enables direct communication between municipalities and communities, serves as a supplement to these regulations (RSA, 1998).

Chapter 4 of the Local Government Municipal Structures Act and Part 4 and the Local Government, as well as Chapter 4 of the Local Government Municipal Systems Act No. 32 of 2000, describes Ward committees' duties as the key conduits between municipalities and the public. The latter requires the local government to interact directly with the populace through ongoing public engagement, which is essential to guaranteeing residents' rights to participate in municipal decision-making. The Batho Pele (People First) statement of 1997, asserts that the demands of the public come first through access to consultation, openness, information, and transparency.

3.6. Public participation: old and new directions

Although there is not a clear definition of public involvement by citizens in state policy processes in the international literature, it is commonly acknowledged that it is fundamentally a social activity that takes many different forms (Mlambo & Kapingura, 2019). It should be kept in mind that it is the state's duty to involve its citizens in the development of policy directions, priorities, and options. A social process known as public participation can take many different forms. The open exchange of information, free and open discussion, consultations, and planned agreements all include public participation in a most prompt manner. Public engagement and citizen engagement are two notions that are frequently tied to public participation (Lane et al., 2017). To generate a comprehensive understanding of public participation, it must be contextualised.

Research on public participation in developed countries has found that the relationship between social and economic marginalisation, equality, and the potential for public participation contributes to the creation of a democratic illusion. This is indicated by citizens' dissatisfaction with democratic politics, as demonstrated by Young (2011), Mees et al. (2018), Kammerbauer, Wamsler and

This covers interactions between state institutions, the corporate sector, and civil society on a wider scale, as well as local interactions with residents (Kammerbauer & Wamsler, 2017). Due to COVID-19, the unbalanced power relations between the state and the populace have become more pronounced.

There is a strong sense that the difficulty of community engagement and participation in an unequal society has reached a stage where citizens are demanding change after becoming aware of the causes and repression of inequality (Quick & Bryson, 2016). International research has shown that direct and ongoing participation in the political process, along with an open and honest exchange of information, leads to the development of strong and tenable policy decisions. The concepts of openness, responsibility, and honesty underpin the fundamental issues of public governance, service provision, and fiscal transparency that support an efficient public sector (Rowe & Frewer, 2014).

Promoting these three tenets requires thoughtful discussion and open communication with the public. The widely held idea that public engagement is important is the source of the scholarly focus on a healthy democracy, which is characterised by a consistent dialogue between a country and its citizens (Creighton, 2005). Political participation cannot be generalised because it is greatly dependent on the nature of the governing system. Due to the detrimental effects of the pandemic on participation, openness, and information access, the importance of social and political participation has come to light (Liang, 2020). Political participation is crucial to solving issues decisively, establishing and maintaining open dialogue, and building trust between the public and the government (Zakhour & Metzger, 2018).

To contribute to an accurate future vision, citizen engagement also requires a thorough awareness of how government operates at all levels of society. The public should participate in politics when it is widely accepted as a duty of citizenship. The general populace needs to start thinking of their own self-interest as serving the greater good. Peace and unity among the intellectually, politically, and socially diverse local inhabitants must come first to accomplish this. Additionally, government transparency becomes crucial if widespread political

participation is to become a reality. When people are fully informed about the duties, objectives, and difficulties that public institutions face, they can only actively participate (Tahvilzadeh, 2015).

3.7. Policy and legislative framework on community participation in South Africa

South Africa's post-apartheid legislative framework emphasises the value of public engagement as a key instrument for the development of democracy. The democratic government of South Africa proposed several laws and acts to promote community involvement in policy and decision-making, particularly on issues that directly touch their lives. Here are a few of these frameworks and policies.

3.7.1. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996)

Section 151(1) (e) of the 1996 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa stipulates that municipalities are obliged to encourage the participation of communities and community organisations in local government. Section 152 (1) (e) outlines the objectives of the local government, which, among them, is to encourage the participation of public and community organisations in local government affairs. Furthermore, Section 195 (1) of the 1996 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa provides that public administration must be governed by democratic values and principles enshrined in the constitution. Section 195 (1) (e) supports public participation by stating a principle that states that people's needs must be responded to and the public must be encouraged to participate in policy-making.

3.7.2. White Paper on Local Government (1998)

Developmental local government, which is defined as the local government committed to working with citizens and groups within the community to find sustainable ways to meet their social, economic, and material needs while also improving the quality of their lives, was introduced in the White Paper on Local Government (1998). (RSA, DCDPA: Section B). To ensure that policies reflect public preferences as closely as possible, municipalities need active participation

from residents who can express their opinions through various stakeholder associations before, during and after the policy creation process (Powell, 2016). Accordingly, in the White Paper on Local Government (1998), the objects of public participation are embedded in the following principles.

- ● Ensure that political leaders remain accountable and work within the mandate given.

- ● Allow citizens (as individuals or interest groups) to have continuous input into local politics.

- ● Allow service consumers to have input on the way services are delivered.

- ● Afford organised civil society the opportunity to enter into partnerships and contracts with local government in order to mobilise additional resources.

3.7.3. The Municipal Systems Act (Act No. 32 of 2000)

The local community within the Municipal Area Working in Partnership with the Municipal Political and Administrative Structures to Provide for Public Participation is how the Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 defines the Legal Nature of a Municipality. According to Section 4 of the Systems Act, the council must promote the participation of the neighbourhood. According to Section 5, community members have the right to participate in municipal decision-making, to give recommendations, arguments, and complaints to the municipal council in writing or orally, and they have the right to be informed of council decisions.

3.7.4. The Municipal Finance Management Act (Act 56 of 2003)

According to Section 23(1) (a) of the Act of 2003, the Council of a Municipality shall consider the views of the local community in the drafting of the budget. This clause requires the municipality to take the opinions of the community into account when preparing, presenting, and adopting the budget, in addition to allowing the community to participate in the budget process. This clause is particularly important because it provides the public with a voice in choices about how to allocate resources. By participating in the process of allocating resources,

the citizen could influence the flow of resources so that his or her basic needs are met (Mathebula, 2016).

3.7.5. Draft National Policy Framework for Community Participation, 2005

The Draft National Policy Framework for Public Participation (2005) identifies basic assumptions underlying community participation, including that:

● Community participation is designed to promote the values of good governance and human rights.

● Community participation acknowledges the fundamental right of all people to participate in the governance system.

● Community participation is designed to narrow the social distance between the electorate and elected institutions.

● Community participation requires recognising the intrinsic value of all people and investing in each person's ability to contribute to the governance process.

● People can participate as individuals, interest groups, or communities more generally.

To make public participation a reality, the Draft National Policy Framework on Community Participation, 2005, identifies the following key underlying principles, which should be considered when involving the community in municipal planning and operation of services. These principles are inclusivity, diversity, building public participation, transparency, flexibility, accessibility, accountability, trust, commitment, and respect (Lichfield, 2021). The draft National Policy Framework for Public Participation is a milestone in the regulation and creation of an enabling participatory environment for planning, specifically within local municipalities.

3.8. Legislative limitations on public participation

Although participation is legal in South Africa, it is not without limitations. Participatory governance should not allow interference with a municipal council's right to govern and to exercise the executive and legislative authority of the municipality (Mees, Alexander, Gralepois, Matczak & Mees, 2018). The municipal council, which is the product of representative democracy, has the sole legal mandate to govern. More importantly, it has the political legitimacy to do so (IDASA, 2002). Participatory democracy is there to complement the politically legitimate and legally responsible structures. A public participatory structure, such as a ward committee, for instance, may add to the formal structures of government but may not replace or substitute these (Mees et al., 2018).

3.9. Benefits of public participation

Cogan and Sharpe (2018) identify five benefits of citizen participation in the planning process:

- Gaining information and ideas on public issues.
- Public support for planning decisions.
- Avoidance of protracted conflicts and costly delays.
- Reservoir of goodwill that can carry over to future decisions.
- A spirit of cooperation and trust between the agency and the public.

Siyabi et al. 2020) propose the following additional benefits of public participation:

- To improve the quality of decisions.
- Minimising costs and delays.
- Consensus building.
- Increased ease of implementation.
- Avoiding worst-case confrontations.
- Maintaining credibility and legitimacy anticipating public concerns and attitudes.
- Develop civil society.

Lovari et al. (2020) maintain that public participation strategies have two main benefits for the democratic policy-making process, namely, participation leads to better policy outcomes; and participation assists the public in developing the capacity for improving their lives. Taking the input of the public into account during the processes of policy-making, implementation is important since it contributes towards combating dictatorship and promotes principles of good governance. According to Mees (2018), public participation paves the way for the process of policy implementation to run smoothly and fosters a sense of ownership and commitment to the process. It can, therefore, contribute to policy implementation by building support.

Furthermore, Lovari et al. (2020) articulate that it could save costs by minimising and/or eliminating the need for policy implementation to be policed. Importantly, continuous public participation in policy-making and implementation could serve as a control mechanism to limit the abuse of authority. An informed citizenry could ensure that public officials use their discretion in a responsive and responsible manner. Through public participation, the public is informed, involved, and educated by engaging with governments on issues that affect their lives, civil society is brought into the mainstream and acquires skills, knowledge, and capacity.

The benefits of engaging the public in genuine participation are extensive (Garande & Dagg, 2018). Public participation is viewed as having a significant potential for major changes and benefits for individuals, communities, and society as a whole; as it can enable decisions to be able to fit the needs of stakeholders and gain support from the authorities (Churchman & Sarat, 2022). Finding and implementing sound solutions to environmental problems typically requires broadened participation of the public. The benefits of public participation can be discussed in both theoretical and practical terms (Stewart, 2016). Numerous public participation practitioners and researchers have written extensively on the benefits of public participation in the literature in different contexts.

3.9.1. Effective decision-making

Public participation can contribute to and enhance the high quality of decision-making because it provides the decision-maker with the necessary information and contributes to the logical identification of problems and their causes (Churchman & Sarat, 2022). It can also improve the quality and depth of knowledge of stakeholders (Forrester, 2021), by providing an opportunity for all parties to collaborate and develop creative solutions (McGurk, 2017). Through public participation, the public and stakeholders could expand their knowledge and expertise, inform debates and deliberate the alternatives, and finally, this dialogue may result in inventive solutions to disputes (Praxis, 2015).

Additionally, public participation usually generates new alternatives, consideration and an assessment of these alternative strategic options (Coenen, 2018). This is because the public is accepted as an important source of knowledge and ideas for decision-making (Fiorino, 1990), and can point out the hidden assumptions that may be effective solutions, aid in discovering mistakes, offer valuable local specific knowledge and experience, including critical information about existing circumstances; or, suggest how the decision should be implemented (Coenen, 2018), in both the planning and management stages of the project or programme (Roberts, 2018). The public participation processes usually help to clarify the aims and requirements of a project or policy (Creighton, 2018).

3.9.2. Increasing Credibility and Legitimacy

An approach to achieve and increase legitimacy in decisions, especially when they are controversial, is to make a decision-making process clear, open, and credible by engaging the public in the process and empowering them to influence the decision-making process. Involving the public usually results in participants perceiving decision-making processes and outcomes as credible and legitimate processes (Smith, 2021). The public will be informed by more information and given reasons for the decisions recommended by public participation would increase credibility, accountability, and transparency in decision-making processes, especially in terms of public confidence, and this will result in enhancing support for the implementation of the plan, project, or policy, and

develop valuable relationships between stakeholders. Public participation can be said to help ensure that final decisions have legitimacy and validity among stakeholders (Harding, 2017).

3.9.3. Reduce Conflict

An approach to achieve and increase legitimacy in decisions, especially when they are controversial, is to make a decision-making process clear, open, and credible by engaging the public in the process and empowering them to influence the decision-making process (Creighton, 2018). Involving the public usually results in the participants perceiving decision-making processes and outcomes as credible and legitimate processes (Roberts, 2018). The public will be informed with more information and given reasons for the decisions (Creighton, 2018). Harding (2016), Bureekul (2016), and Coenen (2015) recommended that public participation would increase credibility, accountability, and transparency in decision-making processes, especially in terms of enhancing public confidence, and this will result in enhancing support for the implementation of the plan, project, or policy and develop valuable relationships between stakeholders (Roberts, 2018). It can be said that public participation can help to ensure that final decisions have legitimacy and validity among stakeholders (Creighton, 2018).

3.9.4. Minimising time and cost

Frequently, public participation is seen as a time-consuming and laborious activity (Coenen, 2015). However, many practitioners argue that public participation can reduce costs and delays related to public disputes that result when public participation is not implemented (Roberts, 2018). The effectiveness of decision-making should not only be assessed in terms of time and costs but should consider any delays and costs from the decisions. If the decision is made prematurely without public participation, it can result in a very expensive project in the long-term (Creighton, 2018).

3.9.5. Developing Civil Society

One distinctive benefit of public participation is better-educated citizens. Participants are not only informed and learn about the project or plan but also

learn why and how decisions are made (Creighton, 2018). Through participation, people can learn about the environmental problems that society deals with and, in turn, can change their behaviour (Coenen, 2017). Furthermore, direct participation also promotes public development (McGurk, 2015). When citizens are involved in the public participation process, they can learn how to influence others and how to develop coalitions. Furthermore, public participation helps participants work effectively with others (Creighton, 2018).

Public participation is more than a requirement to be implemented. Proactive participation is beneficial to both project sponsors and the public. Implementing public participation in sufficient time can develop a desirable and acceptable project, resolve conflicts, establish cooperation and collaboration, and improve the process and outcome of environmental decision-making (Shepherd & Bowler, 2018). Appropriately implemented, public participation can help integrate environmental and social concerns and support sustainable development goals. To achieve this purpose, it should be encouraged in all sectors and at all levels and at all stages of the decision-making process (Creighton, 2018).

3.10. The challenges of designing participation processes

The solutions to these concerns are not simple. There is no formula for good participation. Unlike cars, which despite different models and updates operate in the same way with predictable results even in different environments, public participation is not based on fixed and reliable technology (Eisenstein, 2019). Instead, public policy problems, the participants, methods for organising the process, and other features of the context interact uniquely in every setting. Of course, research is uncovering important generalisations, but the generalisations do not amount to anything like a set of rules or step-by-step guide (Graham et al., 2020). For example, currently, there is a notable excitement about the use of social media and other emerging forms of information technology to support participation. However, social media will not inherently transform the operation and effects of participation. Whether we analyse physical or online participation, the same questions arise (Greenberg, 2017).

These include, for example: the accessibility of the participation space and representativeness of participants; the level of effort, competence, or authenticity that the agency brings to the process; and the influence participants have on decision-making (Greenburg et al., 2011). Forms of e-government are highly variable, and the latest research suggests that social media serve primarily as a new mechanism for reinforcing a long-standing form of public interaction of government, unidirectional communication from public agencies to their constituents about their activities, rather than as a platform for new forms of engagement (Jacobs, 2022).

Design science provides a fresh perspective on questions about how to assemble the best resources, techniques, or procedures for a particular problem. The theoretical perspectives presented thus far are drawn from typical social science approaches to hypothesis testing and generalisable theory development (Ayodele & Abiodum, 2015). Design science, on the contrary, turns attention to achieving desired outcomes in problematic real-world situations. It makes use of evidence-based substantive and procedural knowledge and emphasises the need to respond to particular contexts. A design science approach to public participation thus makes explicit that processes should be designed and redesigned based on new knowledge and experience (Bryson et al., 2013).

Bryson (2013) stated that other context-based differences that are relevant to how well a given approach to participation will work include: the relative centralisation and authority of government entities; the distribution of power among stakeholders; the particular history and people's attachments to a given place; which terms of argument are persuasive (e.g., equity, environmental sustainability, no new taxes); the expectations of government (e.g. level of confidence in government capacity and competence, corruption, values about what is the job of government or other entities); what other avenues of influence are available (e.g. lawsuits, direct political mobilisation); competition among priorities (e.g. how participating) ranks with other household activities (Quick & Bryson, 2016), the relative interest in a particular planning topic); and other dynamics of civil society.

3.11. Conceptualising and Contextualising Public Participation on the COVID-19 Pandemic

Public participation is a political principle and practice that seeks and facilitates the involvement of community members potentially affected by or interested in a decision (Pacione, 2019:6). Public participation is defined as the involvement of citizens in a wide range of administrative policy activities, including setting service levels, budget priorities, and acceptance of construction projects that align government programmes with community needs, build public support, and foster a sense of cohesion within society (Fox & Meyer, 1995:20; Makalela, 2018:50). The Draft National Policy Framework on Public Participation (2007) defines participation as an open, accountable process through which individuals and groups within selected communities can exchange views and influence decision-making processes. It is further defined as a democratic process in which people are involved, make decisions, plan, and play an active role in the development and operation of services that affect their lives.

According to Sebola (2016), public engagement is a controversial idea in the current development discourse. Kanyane (2004); Sebola and Fourie (2006), and Sebola (2016) proffer that the idea of public engagement is identical to community, citizen, and civic involvement. In South Africa, the terms public participation and citizen involvement are used interchangeably. It made no difference whether the engagement is public or community in this thesis. It is worth noting that in South Africa, participation is regarded as a basic right, and public action is regarded as a representation of what South African communities in the country have agreed to with their constituents and the government. Public involvement is a key social problem that, when effectively organised, has the potential to promote democracy while also meeting the urgent demand for action in service delivery (Perlaviciute & Squintani, 2020).

The Coronavirus disease (known as COVID-19) started in China, Wuhan Province, on the 8th of December 2019 - rapidly spreading across all provinces of China and almost ninety (90) countries in just two (2) months. Scientific data show that COVID-19 emanates from a virus that severely attacks cells thus

causing an acute respiratory syndrome 1, which affects the lungs and even leading to death. There was, as a result, dramatic loss of human life, which amounted to a global record of over twenty (20) million deaths, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO).

The COVID-19 outbreak did not only present a perfect storm to test both the economic and health disaster management apparatus of governments worldwide. Indeed, the virus presented human living contradictions in the sense that the virus compelled social distancing, which some can argue that it posed an existential threat to the lifeblood of people as social animals (Lovari, Ambrosi & Bowen, 2020). On the one hand, interpersonal relationships, congregational interactions, government-to-people, people-to-government, and government-to-government engagement became uncertain, disjointed, and uninspiring (Siyabi, Mukhaini, Kanaan, Hatmi, Anqoudi & Kalbani, 2020). For local government practice, the pandemic amplified the disjuncture in these participatory and human networking spaces. However, on the other hand, the pandemic created a hard reckoning with public participation in mitigating the threats it posed (Lovari et al., 2020).

Munzhedzi and Phago (2020) highlighted how COVID-19 amplified the dysfunction in local government in South Africa, from capacity and skill deficits to the transformative stagnation of rural municipalities. The authors proposed a human-cantered approach to tunnel through the post-COVID-19 aggravated dysfunction. It is perhaps fitting that for good governance to thrive after a pandemic that threatened human interaction, a human-cantered approach should be considered germane.

3.12. Participatory of Governance during the COVID-19 Pandemic

According to Leach, Meams and Scoones (2022), participatory governance is about the active and meaningful involvement of citizens, in the way the residents are governed. It is a form of governance that has gained the support of many democracies around the world to bring government closer to the people. In substantiating this, Idasa (2021) maintains that implied in participatory

governance, is the fact that an election is not the only event, in which citizens can be involved, concerning self-government, that is, residents also must be involved in self-governance between elections.

According to Idasa (2021), the National Government in South Africa has devolved and assigned political, fiscal, and administrative power to local governments, because as a third sphere of government, it is the closest to people. This stems from the popular belief that citizen participation in governance enhances democracy and leads to the embracing of participatory democracy as an inherent principle in local government.

The role of Global Governance Practice consists of ensuring a successful response to COVID-19, providing a stream of work on institutional reforms that support client countries in navigating the increased fragility, extreme pressure on resources, and rapidly evolving large-scale service delivery needs (Friedman, 2021).The pandemic exposed the benefits of a stronger, more flexible, and more responsive civil service that can incorporate risk management and has access to contingencies in an emergency.

It has also stressed the need for sound procurement policies, systems, and processes (Friedman, 2021). Helping countries obtain lifesaving goods and services in emergencies is critical to minimising the impact of COVID-19. Emerging lessons from the immediate response to the pandemic point to the need to adapt models of government operations, service delivery, and interactions with citizens (Holloway, 2020).

3.12.1 Challenges of Public Participation during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

There are various challenges that confront public participation within developmental structures and processes. As stated by Miller (2022), among many challenges confronting community participation in developmental processes are resource constraints, abuse of participatory structures by community elites and opportunists; marginalisation of communities from real decision-making, and legitimacy of structures through which the public participates.

Friedman and Reitzes (2021) further identify the lack of creation of a democratic culture of rights; lack of induction of the citizenry into democratic discourse and practice as well as lack of creation of mutual, reciprocal, and political tolerance. In addition, the duo elicits a normative consensus on some key issues that will not resonate well for a conducive public participatory environment in developmental planning processes.

3.12.2. Negative impacts of COVID-19 on public participation and governance in South Africa.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about some gains in forms of the ability of some employees to actually work from home, company executives and managers in both public and private establishments who hitherto could not do without physical meetings are now holding executive meetings through virtual meeting devices such as Zoom and students have more reliance on e-learning as teaching and learning now takes place in the communication space devoid of the usual physical presence of the teacher and the learners, and the four walls of the formal classroom settings. In addition, more families and other social units now look to diversify their various forms of income to cope with the negative economic effects of the dreaded COVID-19 pandemic (Lovari, 2020). In as much as there has been some measure of gains amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, there have also been numerous adverse effects of the pandemic on public participation and governance in South Africa as follows:

3.12.2.1 Stigmatisation

Citizens that were infected with the Coronavirus disease are often stigmatised by family members, relatives, and the public, sometimes even leading to death. They are often isolated in unhygienic environments without adequate care, and some that managed to survive the disease are often kept at arm's length and looked upon with suspicion (Lichfield, 2021). This continuous and sustained stigmatisation often leads to depression and consequent psychological trauma and mental health challenges among the COVID-19 survivors. In all these, the public participation of such citizens is restricted and are not able to take part in citizen engagement, town hall meetings, social activities, and others, which may

necessarily have to be physical, thus their level of public participation is usually restricted because of the associated stigma that goes with COVID-19 patients in South Africa (Liang et al., 2020).

3.12.2.2 Discrimination

The deadly virus has also led to unnecessary discrimination, particularly from Nigerians who travelled from China, the epicentre of the pandemic, and other hugely affected countries such as Brazil and the United States of America (Chinmanert et al., 2020). Even though most South African people who travelled from these COVID-19 hugely affected countries had health certificates from the health authorities of some of these countries indicating that they were free from the virus having tested negative for it, they were still discriminated against, on arrival in the country. This situation often restricted the movement of these returnees, and thus affected their level of public participation as citizens in the country as they were barred from attending socio-political and economic gatherings (Alhassan, 2020).

3.12.2.3 Economic Problem

The economy is the superstructure on which other institutions and structures are built. The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively affected many economies around the world, including South Africa. Subsequently, the stock exchange markets continue to fall exponentially while the rise in the crude oil price, hunger, and massive loss of jobs also persist; hence, the survival of the fittest. What this portends is a huge failure on the part of the government to do the needful. Therefore, governance and public participation are affected negatively. Most international and domestic flight operators and airlines have had to retrench and sacked their pilots and engineers because of the travelling embargo placed by various governments of the world on curtailing the spread of the virus, thus leading to very low patronage from travellers and customer (Chinman et al., 2020; Arndt et al ,2020).

3.12.2.3 Domestic and gender violence

This has become more rampant and pronounced in the COVID-19 pandemic era. As many members of the community continue to grapple with the economic downturn reality, more disagreement, frustration, and aggression lead to domestic and gender violence. Couples that had hitherto hardly stayed together were forced by the COVID-19 pandemic to stay together at home for a long period of time (Arndt et al., 2020). This situation has ensured that disagreements, conflicts, and misunderstandings that are often overlooked because of the distance between the couples are now brought to the fore, leading to physical assaults and violence among couples and partners. In this kind of situation, the public involvement and participation of such households was affected or reduced to the barest minimum (Dludla, 2020).

3.12.2.4 Trust between citizens and government

Trust between the citizens and the government has been hugely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The government is supposed to hold the position of authority to sustain trust from the citizens, but the COVID-19 experience has led to the breakdown and total collapse of the trust between the government and the governed (Dludla, 2020). For instance, the so-called palliatives from the government, which were supposed to be distributed and shared among the citizens only ended up in the hands of politicians, the political party stalwarts, and supporters. Therefore, social palliatives such as foodstuff and other provisions did not actually get to the desired poor masses that they were meant for. The implication of this was that good governance is under threat because the whole essence of good governance is the provision of adequate social welfare for most of the citizens (Dludla, 2020).

3.13. Challenges of Public Participation in Pre-COVID Pandemic

The transition from traditional to virtual platforms is not always related to the difficulties of virtual participation in municipal planning. General delays in timelines, deadlines, and processes generally resulted in delays in COVID-19, but despite some adaptation to the new environment, virtual participation was still plagued by shortcomings left over from more traditional forms of participation

(Lovari et al., 2020). This included the difficulty in contacting all important parties, especially vulnerable groups, as well as participant awareness of and comprehension of planning processes and objectives (Lichfield, 2021).

3.13.1. Lack of Awareness and Education

According to Nyalunga (2016), the greatest obstacle to public participation in South Africa is a lack of awareness and capacity, particularly among the poor who have limited access to education and community engagement tools. Nyalunga (2016) adds that most people, particularly in rural regions, are unaware of their right to have a say in decisions that affect their lives. In support, Furie (2018) argues that the high rate of illiteracy, particularly in rural regions, can hinder the effectiveness of community engagement because these people cannot understand some of the concerns and technical components and therefore cannot contribute meaningfully. Furthermore, Fourie (2018) lists illiteracy as a barrier to community involvement in governance. This is due to the possibility that professionals may overlook illiterate people and technical communication during the community participation process (Theron, 2017).

3.13.2. Costly and Time-Consuming

Scholars, including Elbdon and Franklin (2006); Irvin and Stansbury (2020); Simosen and Feldmen (2019), widely recognise administrative costs associated with community participation. Public participation is more time-consuming and has the potential to slow down the policy and decision-making processes because the public needs to be informed and educated first before they can actively and meaningfully participate in the decision-making process. Perhaps the cost of each decision taken by the community is more expensive than the decision-making by a skilled and experienced sole administrator (Irvin & Sransbury, 2020).

Kumar (2014) affirms that public participation could delay and slow community development, thus delaying the decision-making process. Kok and Gelderbloem (2017) argue that public participation can bring suppressed conflicts to the

surface and delay the decision-making process on important issues. Chinman (2018) asserts that community participation can be costly in terms of staff, time, and money. For example, community members usually have other commitments, and it is a misconception that poor people have extra free time. It may become necessary to hire more staff or train current staff members to deal with the demand for increased public participation (Fourie, 2018).

3.13.3. Lack of a Culture of Participation

According to Storey (2017), culture refers to a certain way of life. Lategan and Bekker (2021) define culture as shared values, which include religion, language, and principles. Lategan and Bekker (2016) further affirm that culture is characterised by a lifestyle that supports the principle of participation. Therefore, culture is significant for community participation. Public participation in local government was neither normalised nor encouraged. The little participation that occurred there was limited to the local areas. Most blacks were not allowed to participate in policy and decision making that affected their lives, although they were forced to comply with those policies (Lategan & Bekker, n.d.). Brokamp (2016) points out that it is difficult to achieve a high level of participation at the local government level. The launch of initiatives such as the Masakhane Campaign and the debts following the non-payment of services rendered by local authorities are indicative of these difficulties (Kroukamp, 2016). From the culture of public participation in South African local government affairs, community participation has never prevailed and has yet to be deeply rooted.

3.13.4. Lack of participation

According to Xaba (2019), South Africa has a shockingly low participation rate. Xaba (2019) adds that municipalities frequently fail to consult the public when making decisions that have an impact on community development. Communities are not given the opportunity to voice their concerns and offer suggestions during the decision-making process. According to Kakumba and Nsingo (2017), the poor financial position of the poor in rural regions not only limits the ability of communities to participate in decision-making processes, but also has an impact on rural development (Kakumba & Nsingo, 2017). Gama (2016) and Hussein (2003) concluded that socioeconomic issues, including poverty, illiteracy, and

lack of education, make it difficult for people to participate in their communities. According to Musukwa (2017) and Hussein (2019), residents are hesitant to participate if they are frustrated by the rising cost of living and economic conditions that rob them of their peace of mind and desire to effectively participate.

3.14. Mechanisms that will Enhance the Successful Public Participation when there is a Disaster such as the COVID-19 Pandemic

Community engagement should be an ongoing, collaborative process that starts early with community members who are seen as legitimate actors that are able to represent and influence the community. Communities should be involved in issue identification and code-sign of interventions and response (Dludla, 2020). A two-way dialogue with communities and other stakeholders, essential for trust building, should be established through multiple channels with transparent, accurate and consistent information to help address rumours and misconceptions (Fourie, 2021). Messages should be imparted that are focused, not fear inducing, respectful; tailored to local contexts, with relatable examples. Regular feedback mechanisms for monitoring and course correction that reveal how knowledge, beliefs and practices are changing are also needed for:

3.14.1. Inclusive and meaningful engagement

Early discussions and negotiation with communities to understand sociocultural contexts and developing culturally appropriate prevention and control strategies, what types of engagement interventions are safe, feasible and acceptable, and what existing platforms and initiatives can be leveraged to support COVID-19 activities (Fourie, 2021).

3.14.2. Communities should code sign and support delivery of prevention and control interventions and messaging

Pandemic management teams must incorporate community members into the planning, response, and monitoring of standard operating procedures. These plans should be disseminated within communities to ensure support (Lovari et al, 2020). This should include topics such as:

- Population movement monitoring, surveillance and contact tracing systems discussed.
- Community remote monitoring and alert systems.
- Community response mechanisms if cases occur, including social isolation procedures, enacting contract tracing, quarantine procedures and community quarantine options.
- Lockdown, isolation, or quarantine support, especially for vulnerable populations, including distribution of essential supplies.
- Referral pathways and medical supply procurement for serious cases.
- Planning and community sensitisation on safe burials.
- Health and safety considerations should be collaboratively identified and addressed in planning stages.

These include the safe structuring of engagement activities, such as delivery mode of engagement; appropriate distancing measures for face-to-face interactions; quarantine or isolation procedures of community; availability of water and sanitation supplies; resource procurement for engagement actors, such as personal protective equipment.

3.15. The key steps to successfully rebuilding political engagement after COVID-19

3.15.1 step 1: From community diversity to unity

In South Africa, freedom and social and community diversity are of key importance for the country's democratic project for the future. Maton (2017) argues that despite the importance of freedom and diversity, it is necessary for people to recognise that they belong to a larger South African community (Maton, 2017).

Leaders are fundamental to uniting communities through their efforts to make individuals and groups aware of the true realities and challenges of their communal environment (Collins et al., 2018). Accountability and transparency of the community and political leaders create a community united in purpose, common trust and authentic communication (Raelin, 2018). In addition, good and honest leadership is often capable of shaping community behaviours thus building deeply

rooted community solidarity (Adler & Goggin, 2019). Community solidarity is not the process of sharing beliefs but a shared sense of purpose (Galsto, 2018).

3.15.2 Step 2: Trust between community and leadership

It is the duty and responsibility of politicians and community leaders to create a united citizen environment founded on the fundamental principles of honesty, accountability and common trust, the foundations of sustainable and efficient leadership in a community (Raelin, 2021). This type of leadership motivates and inspires self-efficacy in the community to meet challenges at various levels (Wituk et al., 2016).

3.15.3 Step 3: Community empowerment

Legitimacy, empowerment, and learning are the core tenets of successful community political engagement. This is because effective public participation empowers people to deal directly and collectively with national, provincial, and local issues. Input is needed from all stakeholders and role players. This means that the citizens' knowledge of complex problems is of key importance (Hisschemoller & Cuppen, 2015). Community empowerment is one of the responsibilities of the state and communities themselves.

South African history post-1994, however, has demonstrated that community empowerment initiatives could be made more successful through alliances between the state and civil society. This is because policies need to be structured in such a way that the path ahead needs to be rubber-stumped as "legitimate" principally by the representatives of the majority. Such a legitimacy has created a healthy debate and agreements that have been shielded in parts of Southern Europe (Font et al., 2016) and have been labelled the professionalisation of public administration (Bherer et al., 2017).

3.15.4 Step 4: Women in Political Leadership

This issue, however, is not unique to South Africa. Research suggests that, globally, women's ability to participate in political, economic, and social processes is stifled by such systems that perpetuate gender inequality (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2018). According to Kumar's research, these obstacles to political participation are likely to persist (Kumar, 2018).

3.16 Practices that can be Used for Community Engagement during an Epidemic Response

The need for community engagement, which has to be context specific as per the cultures, traditions and customs, social norms and collective beliefs ((Wituk et al., 2016). Understanding local realities may require social research, including anthropological studies, if possible, and research to uncover knowledge gaps and existing sociocultural barriers. Community engagement should be an ongoing, collaborative process that starts early with community members who are seen as legitimate actors able to represent and influence the community (Hisschemoller & Cuppen, 2015).

Communities should be involved in issue identification and code signing of interventions and response. A two-way dialogue with communities and other stakeholders, essential for trust building, should be established through multiple channels with transparent, accurate and consistent information to help address rumours and misconceptions. Messages which are focused, not fear inducing, respectful, tailored to local contexts, with relatable examples should be imparted to the citizens (Hisschemoller & Cuppen, 2015).

3.17. Conclusion

In the IDP process, the community is the main stakeholder. This means without the community's public participation, the municipality will be ineffective and inefficient. This chapter firstly explored the challenges of public participation during the pandemic and the pre-COVID-19 pandemic. Values, principles, objectives, and stages of public participation were outlined. In addition, the chapter discussed mechanisms that can be used to enable the engagement and participation of the community during pandemics.

CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents a research design and methodology that was adopted to answer the research questions for this study. For that reason, it is important that this chapter should clearly identify, describe, and explain the methods, processes and procedure that were followed in collecting research data. Furthermore, the reasons for adopting specific methods, processes, and procedures in collecting data must be justifiable. By so doing, it becomes clear whether the collection of empirical data was undertaken using acceptable, ethical, and sound techniques and procedures. In this sense, once the research design and methodology are presented, they will assist other researchers in deciding regarding the replicability of the study. To this end, it is necessary to provide sufficient methodological details to allow reproduction of or comparison of similar studies.

The chapter offers a broad perspective on research methodology and design. Particularly, it expounds on the conceptual framework underpinning quantitative research paradigms. Moreover, this section presents the research methods and data collection instruments or techniques used in this study as well as who the participants were and why they were selected. Moreover, the chapter discusses the data analysis technique adopted while detailing the procedures followed and describing how relevant data to the research questions were collected and analysed. The extent to which the researcher adhered to research ethics in the process of the data collection phase is also well stated.

Ghezzi (2021) provides a guide on research methods aimed at achieving scientific results. Kothari (2004:8) posits that research methodology serves as a systematic approach to resolving research problems. The statement posits that the discipline in question can be comprehended as a systematic inquiry into the scientific methodology employed in conducting research. The researcher agrees with Mamokhere's (2022) assertion that methodologies and designs are indispensable in conducting research, as they guide the overall research trajectory. The realisation of research objectives is guided by research

methodology and design. During the planning and execution stages, a research methodology offers various methods that are crucial for conducting the study (Sarantakos, 2005; Bless et al., 2013). The study assessed the efficacy of public participation on COVID-19 pandemic in the Polokwane Local Municipality. Various research methods and methodologies can be utilised to facilitate the identification of effective approaches that municipalities can utilise in service delivery planning and management. Additionally, the present chapter delineates the research methodology, designs, research process, research strategy, time horizon, data collection, and analysis techniques employed for the problem and objectives under investigation in this study. Furthermore, the chapter outlines the concepts of validity, reliability, and ethical protocols that are adhered to during the acquisition and examination of empirical data.

4.2. Research Design

The research design refers to the plan or blueprint in relation to how the researcher has planned to undertake the inquiry. It focuses on the evidence that is pertinent to answering the research questions (Babbie & Mouton, 2011:74-75). This study adopted the mixed methods research design, which involves the quantitative and the qualitative components. The mixed methods approach utilises the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative research techniques in a study, to give sufficient answers to a research question (Morgan & Sklar, 2012:76). According to Bless, Higson-Smith and Sithole (2013:58), using mixed methods helps to minimise the disadvantages of both quantitative and qualitative methods. Further, quantitative and qualitative data can be gathered sequentially or simultaneously to answer research questions when using mixed methods (Ndevu, 2018).

The plan for conducting research and achieving one's research aims and objectives is known as the research design. Additionally, they suggest that the research design is the process through which a study is organised, planned, and then carried out with the goal of assuring the validity of the results. Because this study was exploratory in character, a qualitative technique was used (De Visser, 2017). To better understand social life through the study of specific people or

locations, qualitative research is used, as it is a sort of social science research that gathers and analyses non-numerical data (Page & Meyer, 2018). Exploratory research is the main type of approach used in qualitative research. It is employed to comprehend the underlying causes, viewpoints, and motivations. It offers an understanding of the issue or aids in the development of concepts or theories for potential quantitative study.

Research designs articulate what data are required, what methods are going to be used and study data (Mouton, 2001). This study used a combination of both qualitative and quantitative research design. The quantitative research was done through the administration of questionnaires to the members of the community followed by the qualitative in interview questionnaires for Polokwane Local Municipality officials to ensure that the data collected were both collaborative and diverse to enable the researcher to draw a balanced conclusion. For that reason, the researcher considered that using the quantitative research method was the best way to address the kind of research problem at hand and that it enhanced quality, logic and clear research feedback.

The term "research design" refers to the systematic plan, structure, and strategy employed in an investigation aimed at addressing a specific research question while ensuring adequate control of variance. According to Inaam (2016), the research design refers to the framework that guides the collection, measurement, and analysis of data to achieve specific research objectives. The three primary research designs are exploratory, descriptive, and causal studies. The following discourse delves into the three distinct research designs.

4.2.1. Explorative study

Exploratory research is a research methodology employed to examine a research issue that lacks a well-defined or comprehensible framework (Casula, Rangarajan & Shields, 2021). A preliminary investigation furnishes scholars with a more profound comprehension of a research quandary and its milieu before conducting subsequent research. Exploratory research serves as a foundational step for subsequent research and proves to be a valuable instrument in addressing research issues that have not been adequately explored in previous

studies (Casula et al., 2021). This research methodology is commonly known as interpretive research and is utilised to address inquiries about "what", "where", and "how". The exploratory research design is characterised by its lack of structure, which renders it highly adaptable (Makri & Neely, 2021). This serves as the foundation for subsequent investigations. This is utilised to explore matters that lack complete definition. Preliminary research is the initial phase of the research process, preceding descriptive research. The nature of this phenomenon lacks structure and, it entails the utilisation of qualitative research (Kapur, 2018).

4.2.2 Descriptive study

The descriptive research design is employed to provide a comprehensive depiction of a phenomenon and its various attributes (Siedlecki, 2020). The focus is on attaining a more profound comprehension of the phenomenon itself, rather than its underlying causes or mechanisms. The statement in question delineates the topic of the investigation without delving into its causative factors. An insufficient comprehension of a research problem impedes researchers' ability to provide effective solutions. This highlights the significance of employing descriptive research, as it equips researchers with a comprehensive understanding of a research quandary before commencing its investigation (Millner, Robinaugh & Nock, 2020). In descriptive research, variables are not manipulated by researchers. The observational method is employed to systematically observe and quantify various variables, and to detect any patterns and associations evident in the gathered data (Millne et al., 2020). Descriptive research is characterised by the absence of controlled variables, as observational methods are employed to conduct the investigation. Descriptive research typically adopts a cross-sectional design, where various segments of a homogenous population are examined simultaneously (Siedlecki, 2020). This serves as a foundation for subsequent investigation. The researcher argues that conducting a literature review before commencing a larger study is a more advantageous approach to the descriptive study.

4.2.3. Causal study

Causal research is a form of conclusive research that endeavours to establish a causal relationship between two or more variables (Kumar, 2020). Causal research is a commonly utilised methodology among various corporations. This aids in assessing the effects of alterations made to a procedure and current methodologies. Ensuring that both variables are not subject to any external forces beyond their mutual influence facilitates the process of pinpointing the causal relationship between them (Kumar, 2020). To ensure precision, it is necessary to hold other variables as constant. This approach facilitates the determination of the precise influence that a given variable exerts on another.

This form of inquiry not only uncovers a causal relationship but also examines the association between the two phenomena. Numerous corporations engage in causal research, such as investigating the correlation between their clientele and the fluctuating prices of their merchandise (Kapur, 2018). Hence, organisations can employ this research methodology to facilitate the development of advantageous results in their favour. This type of evaluation has the potential to assist enterprises in navigating their future with fewer disruptions and enhancing their ability to plan for diverse circumstances (Miller & Ross, 2020). The two research designs are discussed.

4.2.4 Quantitative Design

According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), quantitative research design is a methodological approach that involves the use of predetermined tools to collect data through investigative strategies such as surveys. The data collected are then subjected to a statistical analysis to generate meaningful insights. Mnguni (2018) opines that a quantitative research design is centred on the collection of numerical data and its application to groups of individuals or to elucidate a specific phenomenon. The study utilised a quantitative design, specifically a cross-sectional approach, to gather primary data from individuals residing in the Ga-Dikgale village. The community was asked to participate in a closed-ended questionnaire/household survey to provide their perspectives and experiences regarding the public participation methods during the COVID-19 pandemic. The

study used a quantitative design due to its suitability for the research design. The study used a quantitative research design to gain insight into pertinent topics from the viewpoints of multiple participants. The researcher was able to obtain the necessary information from members of the public in the Polokwane Local Municipality and Ga-Dikgale village.

4.2.5 Qualitative Design

According to Edwards (2020), the qualitative research design is a method that involves the use of various techniques such as observations, interviews, and field notes to evaluate, narrate, or describe research activities or data collected. The purpose of this approach is to gain a deeper understanding of the research subject through subjective interpretation and analysis (Makalela, 2019). The research method used in this study was a case study approach. According to McCombes (2020), a case study involves a comprehensive examination of a particular subject, which could be an individual, a group, a location, an incident, an institution, or a phenomenon. The utilisation of case studies is widespread in various fields of research, including social, educational, clinical, and business. The use of qualitative methods is typically involved in a case study research design. The researcher used face-to-face semi-structured interviews with municipal officials to explore and describe the problem under investigation in this study. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews and made field notes, in addition to performing observations, the researcher used a semi-structured interview technique in a qualitative design to obtain comprehensive insights into the use of public participation.

4.3. Research Methodology

Howell (2013:193) and Mamokhere (2022:64) define research methodology as the systematic and theoretical examination of the methods used in a particular field of study. The statement refers to the definition of a field of study, which involves the examination and evaluation of the various techniques and fundamental concepts that are associated with it. The study considered a broad range of concepts that are commonly used in analytical research. These include

paradigms, theoretical models, phases, and qualitative or quantitative techniques. The purpose of a methodology is not to provide solutions but to establish a theoretical foundation for understanding which methods or best practices can be utilised in a particular situation. This can be applied, for instance, to calculate a specific outcome. Nkatini (2005) views research methodology as a structured approach that empowers the researcher to gather, scrutinise, and construe data to achieve the study's goals and objectives. The study noted the significance of expounding the three distinct research methods: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods.

4.3.1 Study area

FIGURE 2 POLOKWANE MUNICIPAL AREA MAP
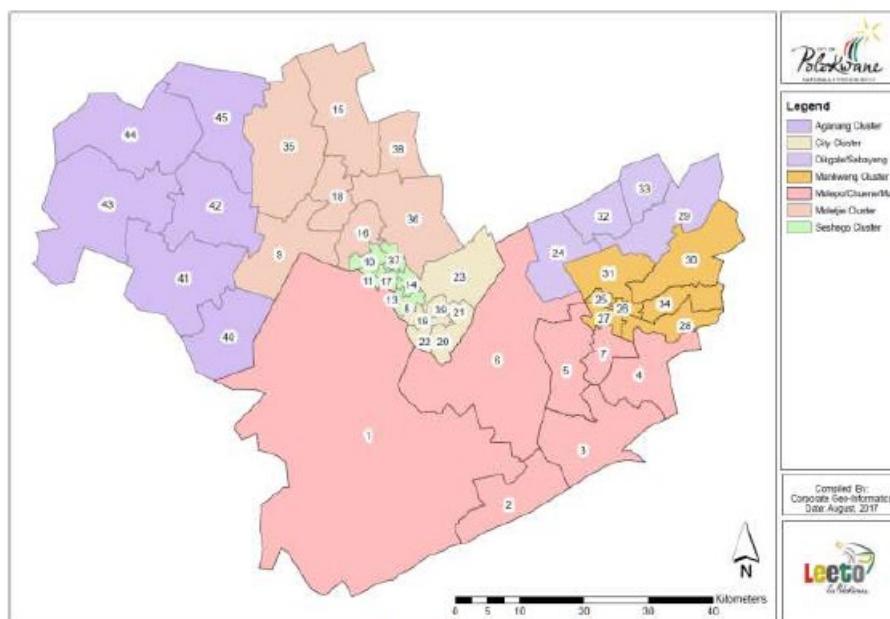
Source: Polokwane Local Municipality IDP 2021-2026

The study site was conducted at the Polokwane Local Municipality. Polokwane is a Category B municipality located within the Capricorn District in the Limpopo Province. It is one of four municipalities in the district, making up just under a quarter of its geographical area. It is a city with more than a century of phenomenal growth and prosperity. Polokwane Local Municipality accounts for 3% of the total surface area of Limpopo, however, over 10% of the population of

Limpopo resides within its boundaries. The municipality serves as the economic hub of Limpopo, and has the highest population density in the Capricorn District. It shares its name with the city of Polokwane (previously Pietersburg).

In February 2002, the city was renamed Polokwane – a Northern Sesotho word that means 'place of safety. The municipal spatial pattern reflects that of the historic apartheid city model, characterised by segregated settlement. At the centre of the area is the Polokwane economic hub, which comprises the central business district, industrial area, and a range of social services and well-established formal urban areas servicing the more affluent residents of Polokwane. Situated on the outskirts in several clusters are less formal settlement areas, which are experiencing enormous influx from rural urban migration trends. These areas are in dire need of upgraded services and infrastructure, both social and engineering, and are struggling to cope with the informal influx of more and more people who want access to an improved quality and standard of living.

The urban settlement of Polokwane serves as the administrative centre and capital of the Limpopo Province. Polokwane represents the most extensive urban agglomeration situated in the northern region of South Africa, surpassing any other urban centre located north of Gauteng. The economic nucleus of Polokwane, comprising the city centre, industrial precinct, an array of social amenities, and established formal urban zones catering to the city's more prosperous inhabitants, is situated at the heart of the region. In the periphery of the urban centre, there exist multiple groupings of informal settlements that are currently undergoing significant population growth because of the migration of individuals from rural to urban areas. The regions are facing a pressing need for enhanced social and technical amenities and infrastructure. They are encountering difficulties in accommodating the informal migration of individuals seeking improved living standards and superior quality of life. The Polokwane Municipality comprises a total of forty-five (45) wards and seven (7) settlement clusters, which include town, Seshego, Mankweng, Sebayeng/Dikgale, Molepo/Cheune/Maja, Moletji, and Aganang. The Polokwane Local Municipality is home to a populace of 837,649 individuals, distributed across 244,359 households.

It is noteworthy that a significant incidence of deficient community involvement continues to be a prevalent and enduring concern. Consequently, the region is characterised by a significant population of socio-economically disadvantaged individuals, resulting in a surge of demonstrations aimed at amplifying their voices. The Polokwane Local Municipality was chosen by the researcher due to its status as one of the municipalities in South Africa that experienced service delivery backlogs during the COVID-19 Pandemic, which are exacerbated by inadequate public consultation.

4.4. Sampling

A sample is regarded as a representation of a population if elements in the sample have been randomly selected from a sampling frame listing everybody in the population. Sampling studies relationships between a population and the samples drawn from it, to draw inferences about the known sample statistics obtained by collecting information from the sample (Sebei, 2013). According to Bless (2006) in Malatji (2019), a sample is a group of elements drawn from the population that is considered to be the characteristics of the population and which is studied to acquire some knowledge about the entire population. Khawula (2016) opines that two types of sampling designs exist, which include probability and non-probability sampling. It is further emphasised that, in probability sampling, the selection is based on a true random procedure, while in nonprobability sampling, the selection is not based on a random procedure. In random sampling, every member within a population has an equal chance of being selected (Khawula, 2016).

Brynard, Hanekom and Brynard (2014:56) indicate that sampling is regarded as "a technique that is employed to choose a small group (the sample) with a view of determining the characteristics of a large group (the population)". To save time, make the research simple, cut costs, and determine specific properties of a whole, a sample of a population is used. There are two major ways in which a sample can be selected: probability and probability sampling. A sampling that allows a researcher to choose a sample where each element in the population has a known chance of being chosen for the sample is probability sampling. This

type of sampling should be attempted when the quantitative approach to research is used as it increases the representativeness of the sample.

The process when the researcher picks a sampling based on the phenomenon being studied is called non-probability sampling. It has been indicated that "this sampling has a limitation of representation; the elements of the population included in the sample are not known. This type of sampling is often used in qualitative studies" (Marlow, 2010:140). It has been highlighted that "stratified random sampling involves taking random samples from stratified groups, in proportion to the population" (Nickolas, 2019). According to Annum (2014:1), judgmental sampling involves the choice of subjects with relevant information for the researcher's focus; in other words, the purpose of the investigation is reflected in the selection of the sample. Additionally, Taherdoost (2016:23) proffers that judgemental sampling is where the researcher includes cases or participants in the sample because they believe that they warrant inclusion.

A sample is a finite part of a statistical population; properties are studied to gain information about the whole population (Friedman, 2021). Therefore, the study used a purposive sampling technique as a non-probability sampling technique in which the researcher relied on their own judgment when choosing members of the population to participate in the study. Purposive sampling is also known as judgemental or selective sampling. Scholars use purposive sampling when they want to access a certain group of individuals, as all participants in the study are carefully chosen because they fit a certain profile (Kakumba & Nsingo, 2017). Only the selected individuals were interviewed. This type of sampling method allowed the researcher to find more information from the data collected.

The sample consisted of thirty (30) Municipal Officials from Polokwane Local Municipality and forty (35) members of the community from Ga-Dikgale Village, which falls within the jurisdiction of the Polokwane Local Municipality.

Sample size

Table 1

Sample groups	Sample size
Municipal officials	05
Community members	35
Total	**40**

4.4.1. Sampling Methods and Size

According to Kapur (2018), the process of selecting a sample is a crucial aspect of conducting research. The methods utilised in selecting respondents have a significant impact on the population to which the research findings can be generalised. The appropriate selection of sampling methods is imperative for the successful execution of research. Employing appropriate sampling techniques is crucial for the accomplishment of effective research. Diverse sampling techniques are employed to gather different types of data for research objectives. During the process of conducting research, one or multiple sampling techniques are employed to achieve the intended objectives. An individual must possess a sufficient understanding of the characteristics, advantages, and constraints of various tools. The categorisation of sampling techniques can be delineated into two main categories: probability sampling methods and non-probability sampling methods.

4.4.2 Sample size

This pertains to the process of determining the number of elements to be chosen from the population to form a representative sample. The optimal sample size should be neither unduly large nor insufficiently small. It should be optimal. An ideal sample is characterised by its ability to meet the criteria of effectiveness,

representativeness, dependability, and adaptability. When determining the appropriate sample size, the researcher must consider both the desired level of accuracy and an acceptable confidence level for the estimate. The consideration of population variance magnitude is of utmost importance. When the variance is larger, it is typically necessary to obtain a larger sample size. It is imperative to consider the population size as it constrains the sample size. When determining the sample size for a research study, it is essential to consider the relevant parameters of interest. When determining the sample size, it is vital to consider the budgetary constraint (Babbie, 2020). Since the study used the mixed-methods research approach, both the purposive (non- probability) sampling and random (probability) sampling were utilised to abstract the required data from the respondents. To complete the study, the researcher interviewed five Polokwane Municipality Officials. The researcher also managed to circulate 40 questionnaires to the residents of Ga-Dikgale Village and only 35 participants managed to fill in the questionnaires. The community members were randomly selected to fill out the questionnaires. Initially, the collective target population for the study was 40. The purpose of the sampling was to draw a conclusion based on the respondents. The sample size provided the information that was required. Both purposive and probability sampling was used to select participants for the research.

4.4.3 Purposive sampling

Purposeful sampling is widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest. Although there are several different purposeful sampling strategies, criterion sampling appears to be used most commonly in implementation research. However, combining sampling strategies may be more appropriate to the aims of implementation research and more consistent with recent developments in quantitative methods (Babbie, 2020). In this study, purposive sampling, for instance, was used to reach out to officials in Polokwane Local Municipality. This was purposefully meant to acquire more information from the officials who had knowledge and understanding of the research subject. The researcher interviewed 5 employees in the Polokwane Local Municipality. Purposeful

sampling was effective in this study since the information was received from employees who were at the required level of understanding of the research topic.

4.4.4 Probability Sampling

Probability sampling implies some type of random selection in the selection of the elements. This sampling method necessitates a selection process in which each member of the population has an equal and unbiased chance of being chosen. Random sampling implies that it is used to reach a high number of respondents, where the use of a questionnaire is randomly distributed to the segmented population (Babbie, 2020) .The researcher distributed 40 questionnaires in the Ga-Dikgale community.

4.5. DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Data can be obtained through the usage of several techniques. The researcher used primary data, which were acquired from participants through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews as well as secondary data, which were collected from journals, books, articles, and legislative frameworks, for this research study. By using multiple data collection methods, the researcher was able to provide independent and contrasting views.

4.5.1 Questionnaires

The process of administering a questionnaire entails the creation of a series of inquiries that are arranged in a specific order to showcase the progression of responses, as outlined by Bless et al. (2013). As per Kothari's (2004) assertion, a questionnaire is a structured set of questions that are arranged in a specific order and presented on a form or a series of forms. The survey instrument comprised structured questions with limited response options, aimed at gathering numerical information. The respondents autonomously completed the questionnaire. The study gathered data from a sample of 35 respondents who completed questionnaires from the selected area. The utilisation of the questionnaire exhibited both benefits and drawbacks in the process of gathering data. Casula, Rangarajan and Shields (2021) assert that employing a

questionnaire is a cost-effective method, even when implemented across a vast geographical area. The utilisation of a fixed form and sequential questioning in surveys results in a reduction of biases in responses when compared to interview schedules (Caulfield, 2022). In contrast to the interview schedule, respondents are afforded sufficient time to provide carefully considered responses, thereby enhancing the relevance of the data. Notwithstanding their benefits, questionnaires are subject to certain limitations.

4.4.2. Interviews

According to Cespedes (2020), an interview schedule is a method of data collection that involves the use of verbal interaction to present questions, with responses being provided through oral-verbal means. The interview schedule entailed a face-to-face exchange between the researcher and participants, who were presented with structured inquiries aimed at addressing research gaps or queries (Bless et al., 2013). The researcher's ability to directly interact with the study's participants facilitated the acquisition of comprehensive insights into their perceptions. The reason for this is that an interview schedule is considered a tool for collecting qualitative data. An essential aspect of conducting an interview is the researcher's ability to intervene and seek clarification in situations where there is a dearth of comprehension and coherence. This intervention ensures that the interviewee grasps the context and retains the intended significance of the exchange (Charmaz, 2014). Notwithstanding the potential benefits of having an interviewer present, such as increased comprehensiveness and objectivity of responses, there is a possibility that the presence of an interviewer may constrain participants from expressing their genuine emotions. An interview that followed a predetermined format was carried out with the Municipal Officials who were the key informants. The researcher interviewed five participants from the Polokwane Local Municipality.

4.5 Documentation

According to Anderson (2017), extant documentation serves as a supplementary source of information that can be utilised to complement literature reviews about a particular subject matter. The primary objective of documentation is to scrutinise a diverse array of contemporary sources to gather independently verifiable data and information. Primary sources for data collection included significant documents such as the White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery and the Five-Year IDP. Documentation plays a fundamental role in the conceptualisation of public engagement and the organisation of service delivery. The efficacy of public participation in service delivery planning and its impact on inclusive decision-making with the governed was assessed through a review of pertinent literature.

4.6. Data analysis

This is the process in which "data is evaluated using the analytical and logical reasoning as a result of examining each component of the data provided". Data must be collected and evaluated. Brynard, Hanekon and Brynard (2014:62) indicate that "the reason for analysing data is to determine data that can be discarded and one that ought to be saved for the actual research". Therefore, a combination of thematic data analysis and Microsoft Excel were used to analyse data gathered from respondents in this study. The reason for combining the methods in this study was that qualitative research requires a data analysis method where the data collected from respondents had to be coded to discover themes. On the other hand, quantitative research requires a data analysis method that indicates the quantity or number of respondents on a particular category

The process of designing an analysis for implementation within a project is guided by the objective of gaining insight into the implementation processes (Crespo, Curado, Oliveira & Muñoz-Pascual, 2021). This involves examining the mechanisms that facilitate or hinder these processes. Additionally, the insights gained from the analysis are communicated to various stakeholders, who may then provide their input on how to integrate the findings into current and/or future

research. Data can be classified into two distinct categories, namely; qualitative and quantitative. In qualitative classification, data are not categorised based on numerical values or methodologies. In this instance, intangible concepts such as traits and features hold significant importance. These phenomena may exhibit either positive or negative attributes. Quantitative classification involves the quantification and measurement of the problems being studied. Concurrent execution of data collection and data analysis procedures are recommended by Kapur (2018). The researcher utilised the Microsoft Excel and Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 to generate and analyse quantitative or numeric data.

4.7. Validity and reliability

The consistency of a measure (whether the results can be reproduced under the same conditions) is referred to as reliability, and the accuracy of a measure (whether the results truly represent what they are supposed to measure) is referred to as validity (Kumar, 2015). The researcher used the pilot survey, which included thirty-five participants to test the reliability and validity of the questions and the instruments that were used to collect data. According to Taherdoost (2016), validity tells how well the collected data cover the actual area of investigation. Validity means to measure what is intended to be measured. Additionally, Bryman and Bell (2015) as cited in Wieland, Durach, Kembro and Treiblmaier (2017) highlight that validity is the issue of whether an indicator or a set of indicators that is invented to measure a concept really measures that concept.

Furthermore, Taherdoost (2016:33) states that reliability concerns the extent to which a measurement of a phenomenon provides a stable and consistent result. Reliability is also concerned with repeatability. Validity and reliability were ensured in the study by following various aspects. Credibility was ensured in the study because the researcher together with the help of the supervisor checked questionnaires and interview questions to ensure that the wording and syntax of the questions were meaningful to respondents. Furthermore, in the research,

confirmability was ensured because details of the process of data collection, data analysis and interpretation of data were lucidly given. Lastly, pilot testing was used in the research study for checking whether the participants would be able to answer questions. This was done by giving a few participants questionnaires to answer before conducting the actual research.

4.7.1 Confirmability

Confirmability questions how the research findings are supported by the data collected. It is a process for establishing whether the researcher has been biased or unbiased during the study. Furthermore, it is indicated that "this is due to the assumption that qualitative research allows the research to bring a unique perspective to the study" (Mike, 2011). Additionally, confirmability concerns the aspect of neutrality (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The researcher used an audit trail in the study where details of the process of data collection, data analysis and interpretation of data were given.

4.7.2 Dependability

Dependability includes the aspects of consistency. This is where the process of analysis needs to be checked whether it is in line with the accepted standards for a particular design (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Furthermore, Mike (2011) emphasises that "dependability ensures that the research findings are consistent and could be repeated". This is measured by the standard in which the research is conducted, analysed, and presented. In this study, an external researcher conducted an inquiry audit on the research study, where the process of the data collection, data analysis and the results of the research were examined.

4.7.3 Trustworthiness

The problem of trust between participants and governments, on the one hand, and specialists, on the other, is only made worse by remote communication and self-service participation (Munzhedzi & Phago, 2020). Depersonalised involvement, give-up rates, mistrust in the corrupted system, worry about the abuse of personal data, interference from hackers, and the impression of fewer efforts were all factors that the experts recognised as damaging credibility in virtual public participation (Arndtet et al., 2020). Municipalities in South Africa

demonstrated the greatest level of concern for these factors. Some individuals might still prefer to employ traditional (in-person) methods of communication with the local administration, stating that it may provide an opportunity for more contact and clarification regarding objectives and policies, even when public administration offers online services (Brunette, Klaaren & Nqaba, 2019). In this study, credibility was ensured through questionnaires that were checked by the researcher and the supervisor to ensure that the wording and syntax had meaning for the respondents.

4.7.4 Sensitivity

The researcher managed to avoid putting the research respondents and participants under pressure to complete or fill in the questionnaire and partake in the interviews. All the study respondents and participants were not forced to take part in the study. This means that participation in the study was voluntary, and the researcher demonstrated sensitivity to the wishes of the target population. It is necessary to exercise caution in the use of language, especially concerning race, ethnicity, gender, and disability. The researcher had to avoid using statements that could be interpreted as racial o sexist by the study's participants.

4.7.5 Right to privacy

The study's respondents and participants were requested to be part of the study at their most convenient time. This was due to the consideration of the fact the people who were targeted for study had right to refuse to be interviewed during lunch, at night and for a prolonged period. To ensure that this right was not encroached upon (Das Laishram & Jawed, 2019), the researcher had to ensure that all the research participants were interviewed at their most convenient place, date and time. Similarly, the survey questionnaires were distributed at their most convenient time to minimise the disruption of their daily duties and responsibility.

4.7.6. Comfortability

Conformability is concerned with establishing that data and interpretations of the findings are not figments of the inquirer's imagination, but without doubt derived from the data (korstjens & Maree, 2020). Therefore, to attain neutrality or conformability, the researcher did not allow personal bias and convictions to

influence the research process. In other words, the interpretations of research data were not based on personal viewpoints and preferences.

4.4.7. Ethical Considerations

Babbie (2020) posits that ethics pertain to moral principles that govern the distinction between right and wrong and adherence to established codes of behaviour. The researcher followed ethical principles while carrying out the research. The researcher received a clearance certificate from the Turfloop Research and Ethics Committee (TREC) to conduct research. Furthermore, a letter from the Department of Public Administration, under which the researcher is registered, was given to the researcher to submit to the Polokwane Local Municipality seeking permission to research within the municipality.

- **Informed Consent**

The use of informed consent is intended to equip potential study participants with the opportunity to make an informed decision regarding their participation in the study (Mamokhere, 2022). Consent was acquired from the Polokwane Local Municipality, Traditional Authority, and members of the community residing in the selected area. The researcher additionally equipped the participants with a clarification of the purpose and goals of the investigation. All the participants were informed of all steps that were to be taken during the interview process. An informed consent form provided by the research participants meant that they understood what participation in the study entailed and that they chose to participate voluntarily. The researcher provided full information about the study to the participants.

- **Confidentiality**

The researcher respected the confidentiality of any personal information collected during research. In this study, there was an assurance of confidentiality and it was exercised; hence, no specific names were requested, the participants remained anonymous, and were not forced to participate. Participants' names were not revealed, and the participants were not coded. Data provided by the participants were used for academic purposes and their responses were treated

confidential. The principle of confidentiality ensures that no one who is not directly involved in the research can access the identity data of the participant. The researcher complied with the Protection of Personal Information Act, of 2013 (POPI Act) to ensure the confidentiality of the participants. The POPI Act sets out the minimum standards regarding accessing and 'processing' any personal information belonging to another. The Act defines 'processing' as collecting, receiving, recording, organising, retrieving, or the use, distribution, or sharing of any such information. The researcher took the following measures to deal with participants who were distressed:

- Validate the person's concern;
- Inform them of the available resources and helplines. Provide contact details of the Wellness Organisation, or Occupational Health Service provider and ensure them that the services will be confidential;
- If the participants might be at risk of harming themselves, the Researcher will encourage them strongly to go to the hospital and contact someone they trust in person; and
- Respond to the participant in a way that is appropriate to the situation at hand.

- **Respect**

The participants were accorded high levels of respect and dignity. The researcher implemented measures to protect the participants from potential social, psychological, and economic risks. The researcher refrained from imposing any economic burden on the participants or coercing them into participating in the data collection process. Therefore, the involvement in the study was voluntary. The study's objectives and goals were effectively communicated to all the participants in a respectful and dignified manner. The participants were assured by the researcher that there would be no negative impact on their social, economic, or psychological well-being.

4.8. Significance of the study

The current study emanated from the need to assess and analyse the effectiveness of public participation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Government decisions about a political matter or a general topic are known as public policies. This decision is founded on values and norms, and policies work to close the gap between these standards and reality (Bricout, 2021). When used in this context, the term "public policy" refers to the government's decisions and acts as well as the goals that drive those decisions and activities. The policy directs choices and activities toward those that are most likely to produce the intended results (Cash & Swatuk, 2017). Making public policy is a goal-driven and decision-centred process. Decision-centric refers to a process that is driven by the decisions that need ate disaster.

This study enabled the Dikgale Community to know and understand the importance and challenges of public participation during a pandemic. The study will encourage the public and improve public participation in difficult times and in the future. The study will further contribute to academic research and the discipline of public administration and help to improve public participation in future pandemics. The study is intended to bring a clear understanding of the importance of public participation during outbreaks such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.9. Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher presented the methodology of the study, which involved the use of qualitative and quantitative methods. Both methods were used to generalise the effectiveness of public participation on COVID-19 pandemic in the Polokwane Local Municipality. The researcher distributed 40 questionnaires to community members and only 35 participants returned the questionnaires and interviewed five municipal officials. The participants of this study were purposively selected to provide the data for the study.

The next chapter presented and analysed the data obtained through interviews and questionnaires.

CHAPTER 5 DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

5.1. Introduction

The aim of the study was to assess and analyse the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the effectiveness of public participation using the Polokwane Local Municipality as a case study. Its objectives were to:

Evaluate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the effectiveness of public participation.

Identify challenges of public participation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Identify the best mechanisms that can enhance successful public participation when there is a disaster like the COVID-19 pandemic.

5.2. Biographical details of the respondents in the study

This section presents the findings and analysis obtained from the community members of Ga-Dikgale Village using questionnaires. It also provides the biographical data of community member participants and the date are further interpreted below. The biographical information of the respondents comprises their gender, age group, ethnicity, higher education, and marital status.

5.2.1. Participants' Gender

FIGURE 3 GENDER
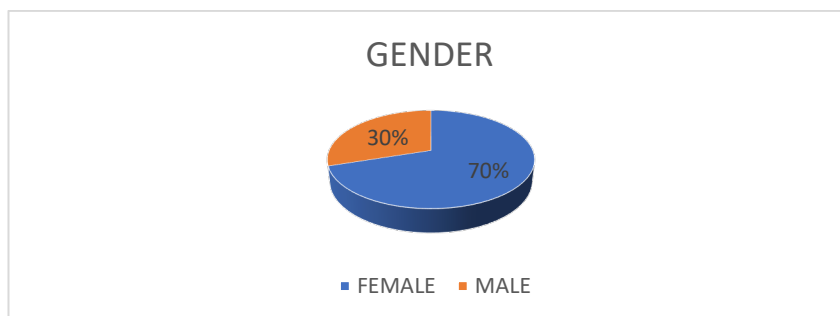
Source: Author's Compilation

Figure 3 shows that 35 of the respondents out of the (40) targeted estimated sample size participated through the questionnaires, where 43% were males and 57% were females. The reason for having an uneven number of genders was because some of the questionnaires distributed were not returned to the researcher due to different reasons.

5.2.2. Age group

FIGURE 4 AGE GROUP
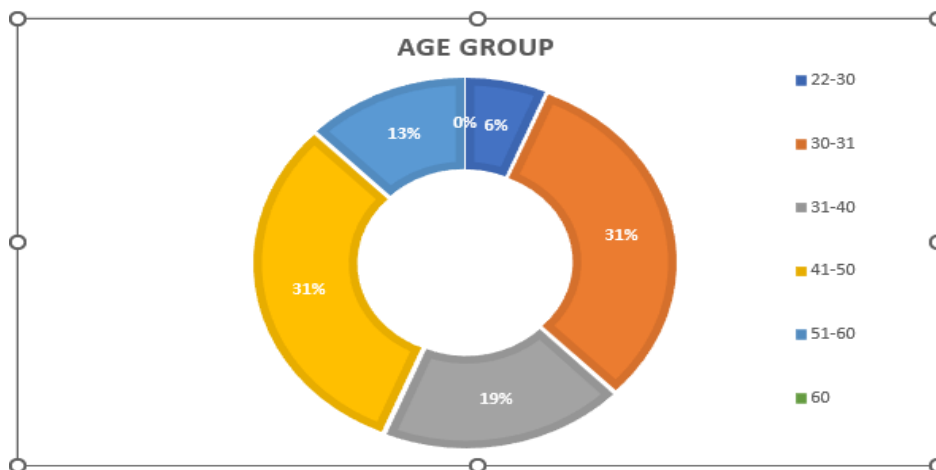
Source: Author's compilation

Figure 4 shows the age category of the respondents who participated in the study. (0%) of the respondents were between the age of 60 and above. 6% were between the age of 22 and 30, and 31% were between the age of 30 and 31 while 19% were between the age of 31 and 40. (31%) was between the age of 41 and 50 and was between the age of 51 and 60, with the latter group comprising 13% of the respondents.

5 .2.3. Ethnicity Category

FIGURE 5 ETHNICITY

ETHNICITY
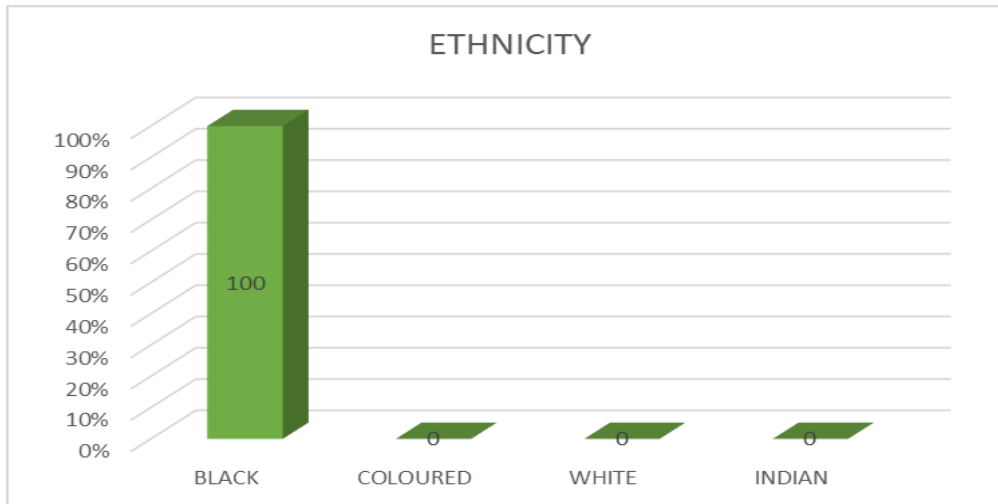
Source: Author's compilation

Figure 5 displays that 35 of the community participants, of which 100% of the participants in the study were Africans, from Ga-Dikgale. Ga-Dikgale Village is occupied largely by African people.

5.2.4. Educational level

FIGURE 6 EDUCATION
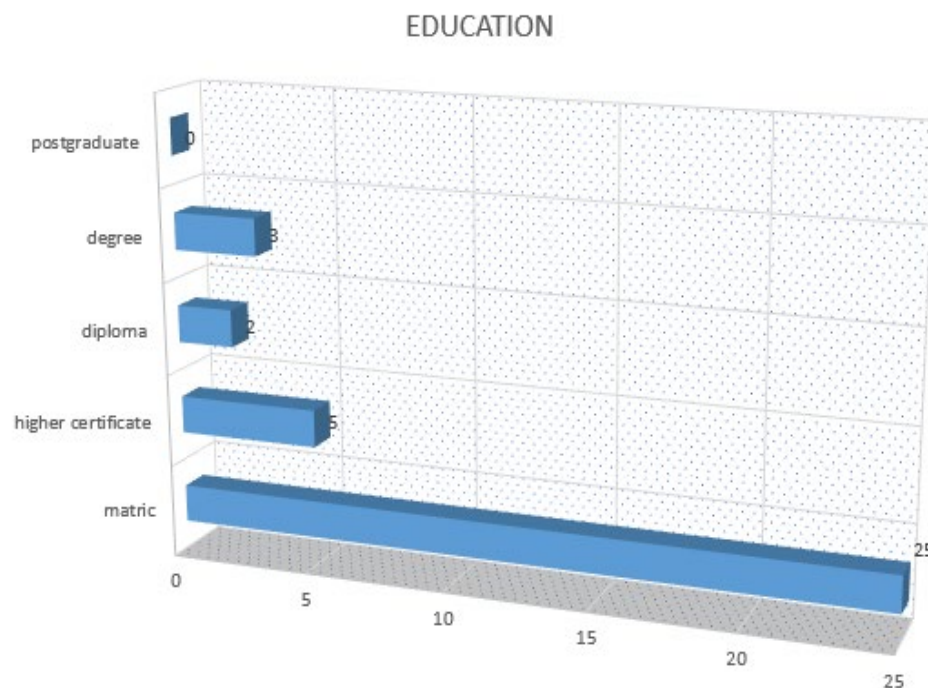
EDUCATION

Source: Author's compilation

This figure displays the educational level of the respondents who participated in the study, where 0% of the respondents had post-graduate education whereas 71%, which comprised the majority of the respondents managed to reach matric. 8% of the respondents attained a bachelor's degree, 5% had a diploma while 14% had a higher certificate.

5.2.5. Marital status

FIGURE 7 MARITAL STATUS
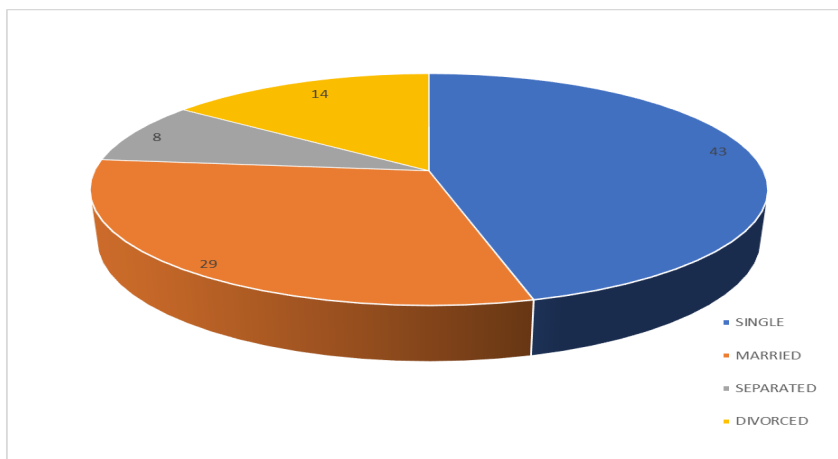
Source: Author's compilation

Figure shows the percentage of the marital status of respondents who participated in the study. It shows that (43%) of the respondents are single and (29%) of the respondents are married. (6%) of the people who participated are divorced while (14%) of the respondents are widowed. Lastly (8%) of the people who are separated participated in the study.

5.3. The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Effectiveness of Public Participation

5.3.1. Level of participation for community meetings during the COVID 19 pandemic.

FIGURE 8 COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION
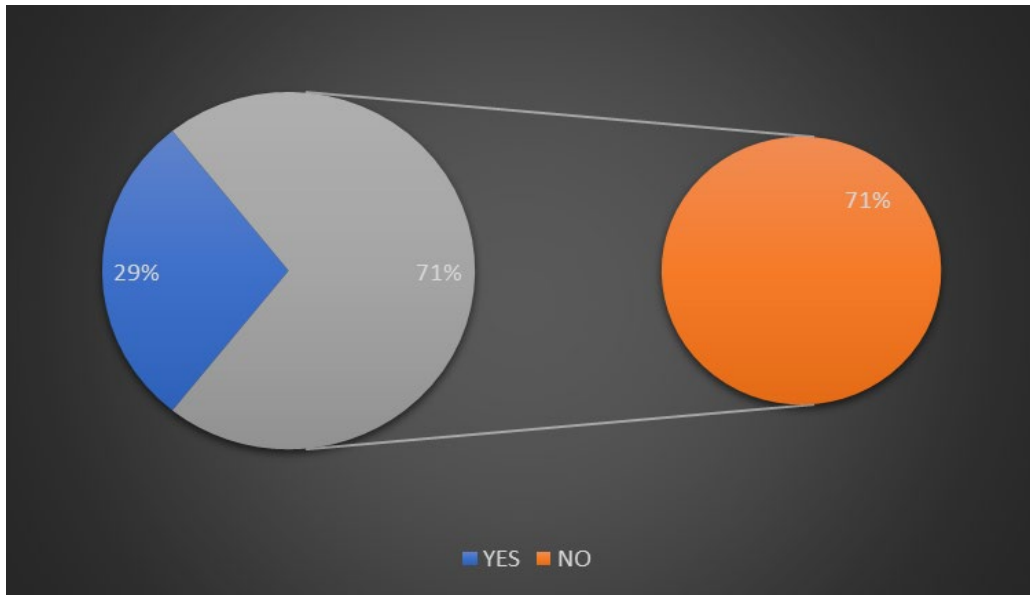
Source: Author's compilation

The figure above shows that 71% of the respondents were not able to participate during the community meeting due to lockdown restrictions and other reasons such as not having access to virtual meetings. 29% of the respondents were able to participate in the community meeting.

5.3.2. Support from the ward councillor during the service delivery.

FIGURE 9 SUPPORT FROM WARD COUNCILLORS
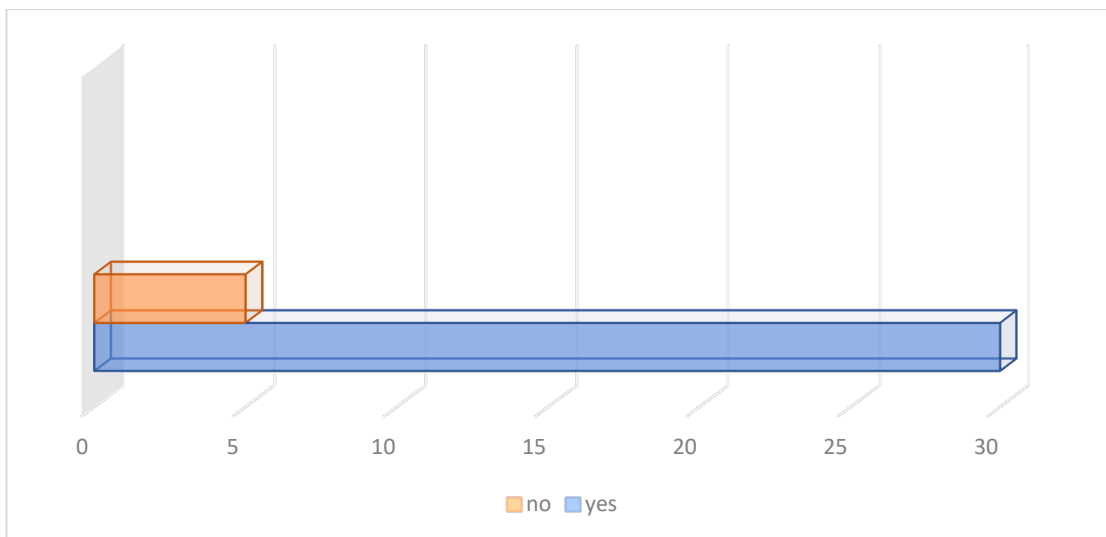
Source: Author's compilation

The figure above illustrates the support of the ward councillor for public participation in the community. The graph clearly indicates that 30 people, which is 86% of the participants, agreed that they had full support from the councillor while 5 (14%) participants disagreed that the ward councillor gave them support during the pandemic. The figure shows that the community did have the support from the ward councillor during the COVID-19 pandemic.

5.3.3. Reasons for getting involved in the public participation during the COVID-19 pandemic

FIGURE 10 REASONS FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
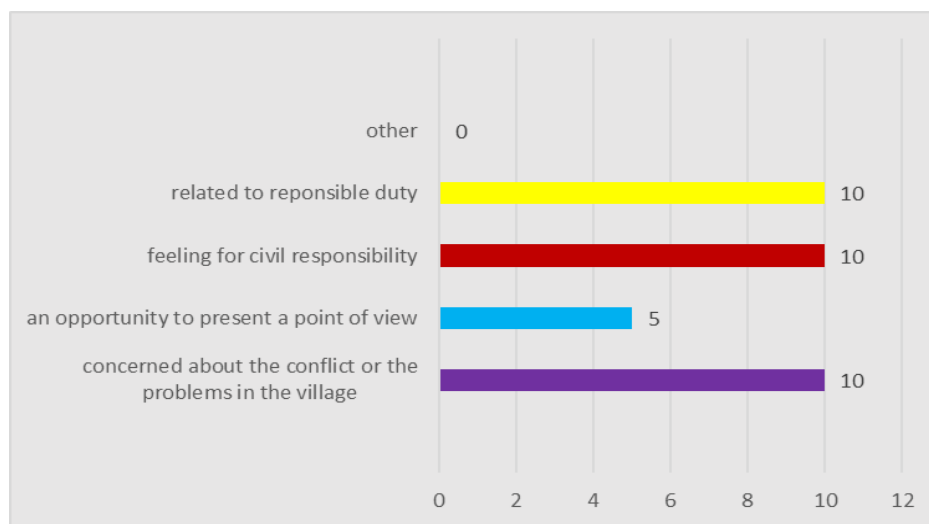
Source: Author's compilation

The figures above illustrate different reasons for the community members to participate in the municipal programme. Out of 35 participants, 10 participated because they were concerned about the conflicts or the problems in the community. 5 participants illustrated that they participated because they wanted to enhance their point of view. 10 respondents emphasised that they participated because of a desire to assume civil responsibility, while 10 participated because they were associated with the responsible duty.

5.3.4. **The worst method of communication used**

FIGURE 11 WORST COMMUNICATION USED
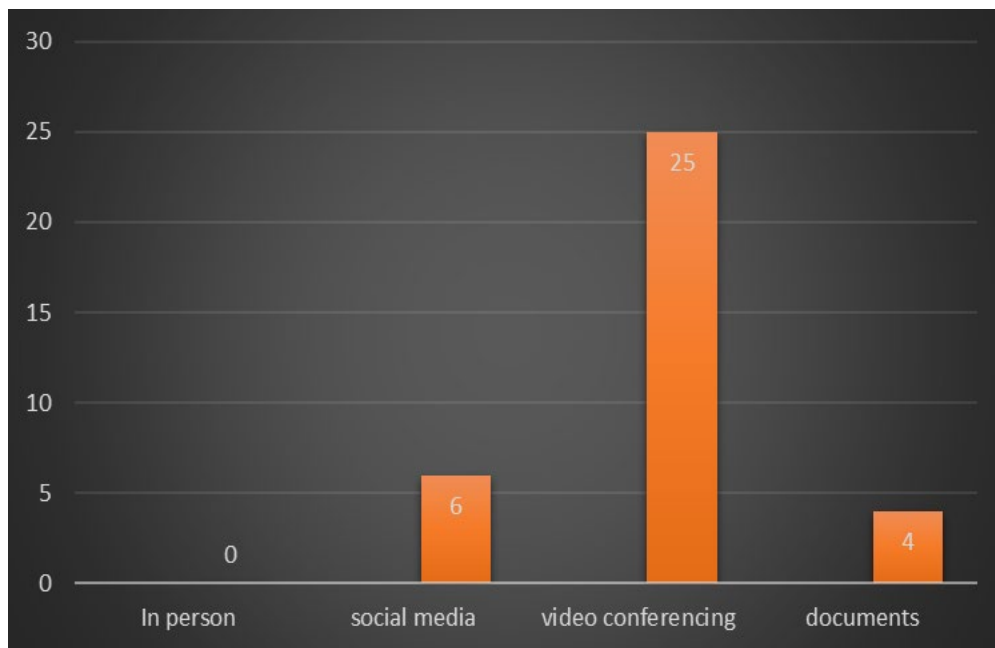
Source: Author's compilation

5.3.5. The acceleration of public participation IDP consultations on service delivery.

FIGURE 12 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND IDP
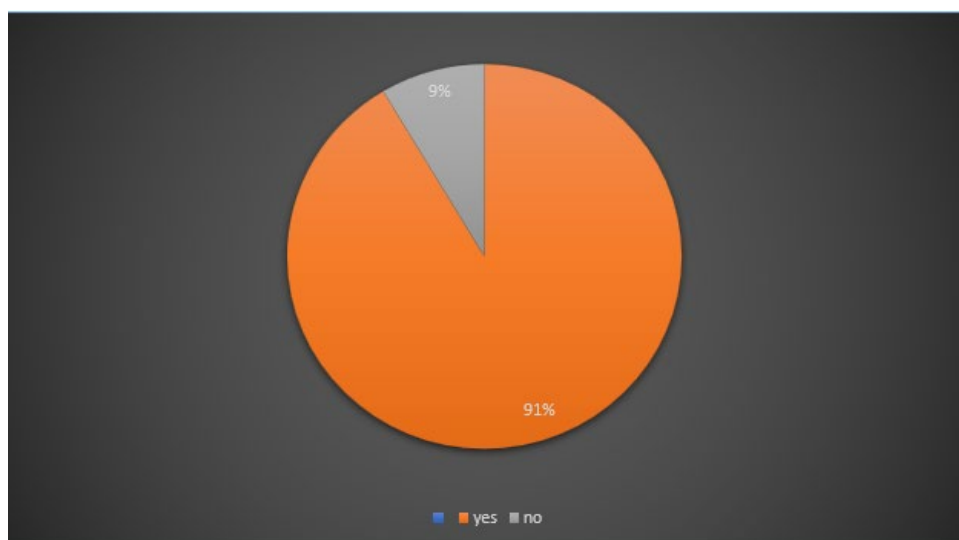
Source: Author's compilation

This clearly emphasises the importance of public participation programmes, which the municipality should make use of to accelerate service delivery within communities. The programme therefore assists the municipality in forming a partnership with communities to identify and address service delivery challenges.

5.3.6. **The impact of level of literacy in the community towards the municipal programme.**

FIGURE 13 THE IMPORTANCE OF LEVEL OF LITERACY IN THE COMMUNITY
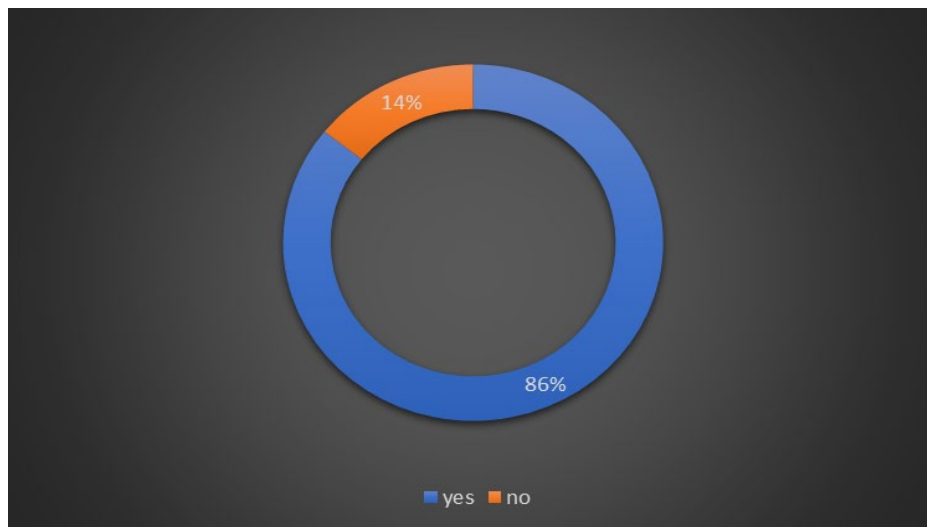
Source: Author's compilation

30 (86%) participants agreed that a literacy level has an impact on effective participation in community programmes, while 5 (14%) participants indicated that a level of literacy has no impact on effective public participation.

5.4. Recommendation of possible measures for future pandemics

5.4.1. The preferable communication method for future pandemic?

FIGURE 14 POSSIBLE MEASURES FOR FUTURE PANDEMIC
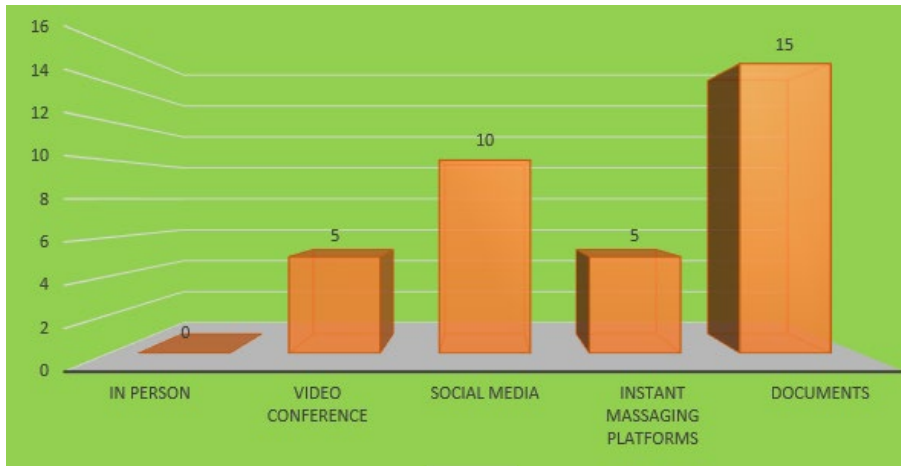
Source: Author's compilation

The figure above illustrates the participants' preferred communication channel during the pandemic. It also shows that numerous participants prefer documents such as pamphlets to be distributed around the community unlike other communication channels because they take time to provide information.

5.4.2. The impact of late communication or delivery of information to the community on participation programmes.

Figure 15: The impact of late communication towards the communication
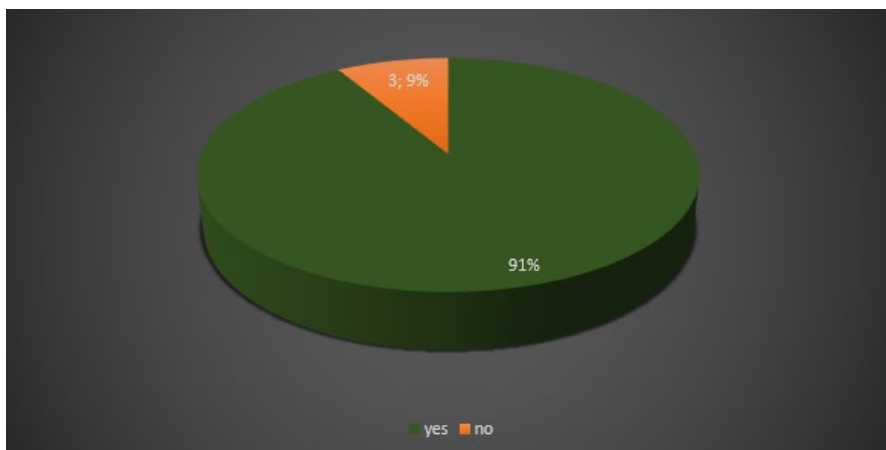
Source: Author's Compilation

The findings indicate that communication is the key towards effective public participation programmes at Ga-Dikgale community.

5.4.3. Things that the municipality can do to ensure the effective participation of communities in the municipal programme

The municipality in each ward should organise workshops to educate community members about the importance of public participation.

The municipality must commit to service delivery during a public participation programme.

There should be regular visits and feedback on service delivery by the municipality.

There should be a timeous dissemination of information about programmes of public participation taking place within the community.

5.5. Findings from Polokwane Local Municipality's officials

This section presents the findings and analysis of the data obtained through interviews with the Polokwane Local Municipality officials. The data were collected through face-to-face interviews and a tape recorder.

5.5.1. The strategies of public participation used by the municipality during COVID-19

The respondents mentioned the different strategies that they used during the pandemic for public participation, which are mentioned below:

Citizen engagement platform

The wake of the pandemic has left a weal of tools for connecting and communicating and this includes how the municipality engages its communities. Having an online hub is an easy way to post updates and gather insights from the local citizens.

Community heat map

This makes it simple for the people to leave their options on specific areas. Since it is an online hub, they can share ideas 24/7 and easily see what others in the community think as well. It is perfect for people with busy schedules and those in more rural areas who might not be able to make it to town hall meetings.

Citizen participation though email

The municipal officials had a list of the subscribers whom they contacted them directly through emails. As such, they were able to send steady stream updates to show that progress is being made and highlight exactly how community participation has helped. This creates more transparency within the projects and encourages people to continue engaging as well.

Getting social with social media

Posting regularly helped the municipality to fully engage with the public and this allowed the citizens to see the progress of the projects. A good rule thumb is to post around 1-2 times a week or when there is an urgent piece of news. In this way, the community will know exactly when to come and look for updates.

5.5.2. Venues for Public Participation

The respondents indicated that the participation took place on social media and through pamphlets. It was a very challenging participation since the information was unable to reach all people, especially elderly people who cannot read.

5.6. Challenges Faced by the Municipality during the Pandemic

5.6.1. The Development of New Ideas, Learning, and a New Way to Look at the Problems from Public Participation Initiatives

The participation allowed the development of new ideas, through surveys, apps, and social media communication platforms.

5.6.2. Time to Collect, Share Reviews and to Distribute Relevant Information

The respondents said that they did not have adequate time because all the information was collected and distributed through all social media programmes. They only took what was written on social media since they did not have access to the public at the ground level.

5.6.3. Participation Process

The participation process was not open enough because some of the people served by the municipality did not have access to cell phones, and as a result, they were not able to participate in the decisions taken by the municipality.

5.7. The Recommendation on how to Address Future Pandemics

5.7.1. Method of Public Participation

The respondents highlighted that the best method of participation is through social media, where the municipality should establish different social media platforms through which the public can give input on emergency measures. For example, the municipality can set up email addresses to which the public can send suggestions on how best it can deal with a pandemic. Other platforms may also be used to gather inputs on pandemic policy-making committees.

5.7.2. The Barriers to Effective Public Participation during the Pandemic

The municipal officials outlined different barriers that can contribute to ineffective public participation in the future pandemic, namely:

Not deemed an essential service.

Low cash flow or lack of funds.

Unable to perform required maintenance.

 Delays in projects and constructions' suspension.

Lack of spare parts and unable to conduct repairs.

Funds redirected to deal with COVID-19.

Service providers not prepared to extend credit to the municipality.

5.7.3. Factors that Contribute to Achieving Effective Public Participation Against Future Pandemics

The respondents highlighted a few recommendations against future pandemics for effective public participation:

> Educate communities on social distancing, hygiene, and safety measures.
>
> Focus on previous sustainable service through efficient technologies.
>
> Consider long-term financial implications in the planning and budgeting.
>
> Investigate community-driven interventions and volunteer programmes.
>
> Seek opportunities for public-private partnerships.
>
> Facilitate shared responsibility for the health and safety of every citizen.

5.8. Conclusion

This chapter presented the empirical research findings of the study and provided an analysis, interpretation, and a discussion of the findings. The chapter also presented the quantitative data collected using a closed-ended questionnaire, followed by the qualitative data gathered using a semi-structured interview. Quantitative data were analysed and interpreted using graphs and percentages, while qualitative data were analysed and interpreted according to themes. Public participation is broad as some aspects were not achieved by the study. The local municipality must be seen as an active mediator between the government and the community to achieve successful public participation.

The participants' responses were interpreted and discussed. The main aim was to reflect on the results of the empirical study, which sought to analyse public participation in the Polokwane Local Municipality. The next chapter provides the summary, conclusion, and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER 6 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine whether community members in the Polokwane Local Municipality were involved in service delivery planning and implementation of service delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the study evaluated the use of public participation approaches and mechanisms to improve planning. Furthermore, the study evaluated the effectiveness of public participation to augment service planning. This final chapter of the study concludes and makes recommendations related to the study's objectives.

6.2 Summary

6.2.1 Summary of chapters

This study's main objective was to evaluate and examine how the COVID-19 pandemic affected the Polokwane Local Municipality's ability to effectively engage the public. The six chapters that make up the study are outlined below:

A thorough summary and background for the study were given in Chapter 1, along with an explanation of the problem statement, research questions, aims, objectives, and definitions of important terms. The theoretical foundations of public participation ideas were explained in Chapter 2. These theoretical stances enhanced the conceptual framework and laid the foundation for the investigation's advancement. As a result, the chapter clarified the theories behind important subjects and public involvement theories. Diverse perspectives were discussed regarding the function of local governments in managing and supervising local municipalities, to ensure their efficient delivery of services to the public. The coherence of the theories employed in this investigation can be attributed to their persuasive justifications and their ability to enhance the existing and expanding corpus of knowledge. The numerous theoretical frameworks support the involvement of accountable governing entities and organizations to encourage and enable public participation in the planning processes. Chapter three contextualised public participation. The notion of public participation has been elucidated as a mechanism by which members of a community are

bestowed the power to engage in defining the issues actively and earnestly that affect them, make decisions regarding the factors that influence their lives, devise, and execute policies, strategies, develop, and provide services, and take decisive action to effectuate change. This chapter scrutinised the efficacy of public participation on COVID-19 pandemic and the legislative framework for public participation.

A thorough description of the research methodology was provided in the fourth chapter. This chapter explained the research design, paradigm, and methods that were used to meet the study's goals.

The results of the investigation were reported in the fifth chapter. Both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies were employed in this chapter. A semi-structured interview was used to acquire qualitative data, while a closed-ended questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data. The methods used for data analysis included the identification of themes to analyze the qualitative data and the use of graphical representations and percentages to analyze the quantitative data. An examination of the findings considering existing literature and legal frameworks was presented in the chapter. To create and analyze quantitative or numerical data, the researcher used Microsoft Excel and the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. One technique for clearly and succinctly presenting study results is descriptive statistical data analysis. Visual aids like charts and statistical measurements like frequencies and percentages were used to display the data. Rather of being quantifiable, the statistics that were presented were qualitative in nature and were described. The empirical objectives of the study served as the basis for the analysis of the research findings.

6.3. Conclusion

The study comes to an end with this chapter. This chapter's objective was to offer conclusions and suggestions based on the research. The first section of the chapter included an overview of the previous chapters as well as a synopsis of the major conclusions, study limits, suggestions, and opportunities for additional research on the subject. Considering this, it may be said that public involvement

is a suitable instrument for improving service delivery. Encouragement of public engagement in service delivery during the COVID-19 epidemic posed and continues to pose a significant issue for numerous South African municipalities, including the Polokwane Local Municipality.

The report acknowledged that public participation in the planning process for service delivery during the COVID-19 epidemic was limited. The study's final finding acknowledges the value of public involvement as a strategy for raising service delivery planning, clearing backlogs, and lowering objections. Furthermore, it is observed that, particularly for young people, public meetings are no longer important in the modern period. The COVID-19 epidemic and the development of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) have altered traditional methods of doing things. Municipalities must so adapt to the new era or risk falling behind. Even though using 4IR platforms or tools will increase public engagement, the researcher still thinks that rural residents without access to adequate telecommunications shouldn't be left behind because some of them are unable to use these platforms. It is also evident from the current nationwide load-shedding that 4IR is ineffective in rural areas. Effective public participation can be greatly enhanced by having a solid understanding of the Batho Pele principles.

The gap between public engagement and service delivery planning is acknowledged in the study's conclusion. Thus, more research needs to be done to close the knowledge gap and educate the public, civil society organizations, and local government officials.

6.4. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study proposes the following recommendations that can be used to enhance public participation in the event of future pandemics. The findings may also be applied to other municipalities in South Africa facing similar challenges. The following recommendations are suggested in line with the findings of this study:

6.4.1. The Infusion of Digital Platforms

The study suggests that the unusual COVID-19 epidemic has sparked public engagement in local governance through the use of digital media. This is because towns struggle to maintain social distance policies while staffing community halls for service delivery and planning consultations. Digital platforms provide a way for citizens to analyze and discuss local government policies and services in-depth. It also offers a fresh approach to inclusive public interaction that encourages active involvement, experience sharing, and real-time collaboration as best practices. The implementation of digital platforms is expected to augment the effectiveness and inclusivity of governance by enabling municipalities to sustain continuous engagement with a portion of their people (Edelenbos & Meerkerk, 2016).

The progress made in digital involvement could facilitate two-way communication between residents and local administrations, in addition to providing additional opportunities for citizens to participate in public decision-making processes. When traditional channels, such town halls, public forums, and municipal council meetings, are already established, digital channels are often implemented. Digital venues for participation are often an extension of current venues, not a replacement, therefore they increase the channels via which citizens can engage in public decision-making (Fox & Stoett, 2016). Bypassing middlemen like political parties, bureaucracies, and traditional media outlets, the application of digital advances may enable a closer contact between citizens and power institutions. The digital platforms available for participation in planning today bear little similarity to traditional approaches, and they fail to properly leverage the potential advantages that technology may offer. Additionally, these platforms usually only allow for the unidirectional sharing of information.

6.4.2. Centring Society in Municipal Planning

According to the research, for the Polokwane Local Municipality to successfully meet the fundamental needs of the governed community, it is imperative that social priorities be given top priority in municipal planning and that the IDP be coordinated. Prioritizing society in the planning of service delivery is justified by the idea that public participation should be seen as a tool to achieve desired

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outcomes by encouraging interactive and thoughtful engagement, rather than as a bare minimum of regulation. It is advised that the Polokwane Local Municipality involve the community in the planning process for service delivery across all stages, including the planning, implementation, and assessment phases, in light of the research findings. Furthermore, it is crucial that the processes of public participation in the creation of the plan and the selection of service providers are comprehensive and transparent (Friedman, 2004). It is suggested that the Polokwane Local Municipality improve community participation to promote increased youth and community involvement in IDP.

According to Garcia-Zamor (2019), there is a legislative requirement for community involvement in local government activities. This involvement requires an environment that supports informed decision-making that takes the concerns of the governed society into account. Consequently, it is the municipality's responsibility to guarantee this kind of atmosphere. The Polokwane Local Municipality should invite pertinent stakeholders to partake in the prioritization of needs and hold open and inclusive discourse with the community. Municipalities must honor the community promises they have made through public engagement and consultation. Community members must take accountability for issues pertaining to their own areas, and no development project should be carried out without their active involvement (Ghezzi & Ghezzi, 2020). The final argument makes the case that community involvement, which encourages a sense of self-reliance and ownership, can lead to sustainable development.

6.4.3. Review of Approaches and Mechanisms of Public Participation

Despite the adoption of IDP planning and application, the municipality is having difficulty encouraging public engagement in subjects pertaining to the COVID-19 epidemic. This insufficient promotion of public participation has led to unsustainable services. An assessment of the procedures and systems used by the local government must be conducted.

6.4.4. Use of Municipal Service Partnerships

Prior to the global COVID-19 pandemic, Municipal Service Partnerships (MSPs) were formed as a vital tool for improving and accelerating municipal service delivery in the context of local government (Harrison, Reilly, & Creswell, 2020). The public's involvement in service delivery planning and overall service delivery may be improved by MSPs' contribution of technical, financial, volunteer, and human resources. It is anticipated that using MSPs will help improve a number of important areas, including cost-effectiveness, sustainability, accountability, accessibility, and integration of services (Iovino & Tsitsianis, 2020). MSPs are a practical means by which the South African Local Government sector may provide services to its citizens. The discussion surrounding MSPs is sometimes interpreted as a political ploy to purposefully transfer responsibility for providing services to the private sector while disregarding state institutions. MSPs are designed to provide municipal services in a new and strategic way, not to replace outdated and traditional means of doing so (Kumar, 2020). However, it is essential to take them into account as a possible remedy to improve the quality of services offered in the various towns around the country. They are thought to be more effective and efficient than municipalities, at least in part. MSPs are intended to offer governments cutting-edge options for addressing backlogs in service delivery in a variety of locations.

Local governments are faced with the dilemma of developing internal resources or acquiring the necessary skills to meet their goals. As a result, the study advises against leaning on the private sector for specialized service provision and in favour of formalizing municipal bodies to prevent the emergence of corrupt practices. To enable the effective implementation of MSPs, it is crucial that any occurrences of corrupt behaviour by public servants be confronted head-on, making use of the applicable legal frameworks that are now in place (Madue, 2015). Private organizations have consistently shown a strong commitment to working with the government to serve communities for a substantial amount of time. This commitment has also included working with the government to combat the COVID-19 outbreak. To fight the pandemic, poverty, backlogs in service delivery, and social injustice, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa made a

plea in March 2020 that emphasized the significance of developing stronger partnerships, encouraging solidarity, fostering collaboration, and exchanging knowledge and experience. Lastly, it is advised that local governments come up with a creative and practical plan to improve their services. delivery.

6.4.5. Address Conflictual Dichotomy between Traditional Leadership and Municipal Authority

To prevent community members from being confused about public engagement in service delivery planning, the boundaries of the municipality's and the traditional authority's rights and responsibilities should be clearly defined (Madumo, 2015). The latter is explained by the fact that traditional leaders believe municipal councilors are taking over and replacing them in their sphere of influence. They also believe that because traditional authority is responsible for the rural areas, they are becoming less relevant in the eyes of their constituents (Kgoshi). It is advised that the municipality enhance its planning for the provision of services in these traditionally administered and managed areas.

Traditional leaders are either not involved at all or very somewhat involved in the tasks and functions that municipalities take on. The reason for this phenomenon is that traditional leaders could refuse to allow municipalities to serve regions under their control until their place in the new system is made clear. The problem is attributed to council members' neglect to consult with traditional leaders before making decisions that carry substantial communal implications. One of the problems is when planners and officials use technical language, which can make it difficult to understand the municipality's goals and cause misunderstandings among traditional leaders. Traditional leaders in South Africa believe that their interests have been overlooked and marginalized by the country's democratic administration (Madzhivandila & Asha, 2012).

Community members are unable to get the services to which they are legally entitled in their respective municipalities due to the disparities in treatment between traditional leaders and local government. The separation of elected politicians from traditional authority blocks a vital line of communication, impeding the efficient provision of public services (Makri & Neely, 2021). Lack of

consultation between traditional leaders and the municipality during development project implementation may lead to conflict. The fundamental source of the conflict between council members and traditional leaders is the mismatch between law and policy. Traditional leaders oppose municipalities because they see them as a way to keep them out of local governance (Malatji, 2019).

According to development literature, traditional leadership at the local level should have its terms of reference clarified by the central government. It is recommended that the local government structure take traditional leaders' incorporation into account (Maluka, Diale & Moeti, 2014). This would entail passing the necessary laws and precisely outlining their functions within the local government institutions. Legislative and other actions aimed at promoting good governance and development in rural areas should prioritize strengthening the partnerships between local governments and traditional leadership institutions (Maluka, Diale & Moeti, 2014). There is a clear need to promote cooperation and alignment between the administration and traditional leadership. It is imperative that traditional leaders participate in decision-making processes; their input should go beyond simply voicing opinions on issues that are being discussed. Councillors and the institution of traditional leaders must work together to address issues related to service delivery because they serve the same communities (Manaf, Mohamed & Lawton, 2012).

6.4.6. Attract Well-Skilled Human Resources and Use of Technical Assistance

The ability to facilitate, negotiate, manage, coordinate, and comprehend the context and surroundings in which services must be offered are only a few of the many competences required for effectively working with communities (Manthata, 2004). Being able to effectively engage communities, take into account their opinions, and provide them constructive criticism requires proficiency in managing a robust communication lifecycle. Public engagement may prove to be ineffective and, in the worst-case scenario, a harmful endeavour if municipal officials are not provided with sufficient training (Martelli & Greener, 2018). In the latter case, communities may become disinterested in participating, viewing engagement sessions as a pointless endeavour, or they may stage protests as a

result of growing resentment (Martelli & Greener, 2018). In order to enable employees of the municipality who are in charge of managing public involvement to get the requisite expertise in this field, it is imperative to offer them encouragement and assistance. In light of the research's conclusions, the municipality is advised to employ highly skilled human capital to improve public participation in local government issues, especially when it comes to service delivery planning.

It is also advised that, rather than offering standardized programs, capacity-building efforts should be based on assessments of the needs for municipal employees and tailored to the specific area and situation. In order to ensure that agreed-upon procedures are implemented accurately and effectively, it is advised that capacity-building initiatives be supported by an assessment and monitoring system that gives performance monitoring top priority (Masenya & Kgobe, 2019). Regular use of the tool will make it easier to assess performance in a methodical and trustworthy manner by looking at the various inputs and outputs connected to each strategic goal. The results of the investigation show that local administrations must have access to technical support. In addition, the employment of technical assistance in the context of local government can enhance the ability of municipal staff to maximize the distribution of scarce resources in an economical and efficient way.

6.4.7. A Need for Strategic Governance and Funding System

According to the report, Polokwane Local Municipality should demand a strategic funding and governance structure that can provide underprivileged populations hope. In addition, local demands have to be matched with income collection and institutional frameworks (such SDBIP and IDP). In order for the municipality to make wise investments in cities and all other areas under its supervision or control, financial support for public participation in local government can aid in improving budgeting procedures. Effective governance structures, strategic financing sources, and strategic local government investments must work together.

Many rural municipalities are currently facing an enormous challenge in funding the services and infrastructure required to meet the basic needs of growing rural communities, with little ability to make progressive capital investments because of financial limitations (Mashamaite, 2014). The potential for revenue production is typically limited by the lack of technology infrastructure and capacity in local financial administration, as well as by inadequate regulatory frameworks and unfavourable political systems. Public sector underspending has a severe effect on rural productivity and local economic vibrancy, which feeds a vicious cycle of fiscal deficits, unfavourable rural conditions, and economic stagnation.

However, for struggling local governments, putting in place strategic governance and funding mechanisms could present a bright future. There are opportunities to match local needs to organizational structures and revenue-generating systems (Davids et al., 2019). Good financial management can make use of strategies to improve revenue collection efficiency, win support from the public, capitalize on economies of scale in rural and regional areas, reduce land speculation and sprawl, stimulate the economy, and improve affordability for rural impoverished populations. Local governments can deliberately invest in their urban regions through the resulting budgetary improvements, which will encourage growth, income generation, and prosperity in a positive feedback cycle.

6.4.8. Promote Active Participation

According to the research, the Polokwane Local Municipality should avoid passive forms of engagement to address concerns of inadequate participation. Even though there are many benefits to guaranteeing more public involvement in the planning process, achieving this has often been difficult or has remained relatively restricted. Protests over service delivery may be less common if the public is encouraged to participate in planning for service delivery (McCombes, 2020). Every stakeholder affected by a public authority's choice or actions has the right to be consulted and provided input regarding that decision. This is the core principle of active public participation (Davids et al., 2019).

The people who were chosen to take part in the research accurately represent the target audience. Even while it might not be possible to include every member of a particular population, the goal ought to be to try to include all legitimate interests, even those that transcend national boundaries. The process must continue to be unbiased and unaffected by financial or political pressures. Relying on locally developed entities that can have political ties should be done with caution. Participating the public early on is crucial. When a policy requirement is identified, the council should notify the public as soon as possible of the perceived need (McKubre, Macdonald, Sayers & Macdonald, 2018). Participants' contributions should influence the policy-making process. The public must feel confident that their contributions will influence the decision-making process in order for public engagement to be considered effective and dynamic. Feedback about the outcomes of their contributions should also be made available to the broader public.

Ensuring transparency in the process is crucial. It is imperative that all parties who might be affected are informed about the participation process. Public involvement must be strategically positioned at a level that can efficiently supervise and coordinate interdepartmental responses to public participation, given that it is a ubiquitous problem (Merino, 2018). The strategic placement of public participation is crucial due to its ubiquitous concern and ability to properly oversee and coordinate inter-departmental responses to it. Every municipal approach, policy, and activity should incorporate public engagement (Miller & Ross, 2020).

6.4.9 Strengthening the role of ward committees

Immediately after local elections, which takes place every five years, municipalities in consultation with communities in each ward elect representatives called ward committees. This structure plays an important role as a link between council and the community. In this regard Ababio (2007:614) contends that ward committees form bridges by facilitating communication between council and the citizens they represent, and actively participating in determining core municipal processes (Mohajan, 2017). It is therefore important that the municipality should capacitate ward committees on public participation,

community liaison and on the IDP process, among others, to strengthen their role within the wards. For this purpose, the municipality has to annually allocate funds in its budget to implement capacity building programmes towards strengthening the role of ward committees. In addition, ward councillors' offices should develop proper administrative and management system to support ward committees (Mohajan, 2017). Resolutions of council should also be circulated to all ward committees.

6.4.10. Public hearings

Public hearing outreach or a public participation program are two ways to increase public engagement (Ndebele & Lavhelani, 2017). But before a municipality can cultivate a culture of citizen engagement, it must cultivate a culture of municipal governance that balances participatory governance with formal representative government. In addition to the culture, the municipality needs to improve the public engagement tools that are already in place.

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TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

MEETING: 22 May 2023

PROJECT NUMBER: TREC/136/2023: PG

PROJECT:

Title:	Assessing and analysing the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the effectiveness of public participation: A case study of Polokwane Local Municipality.
Researcher:	MM Mokgwankgwa
Supervisor:	DR E. Zwane
Co-Supervisor/s:	N/A
School:	Economics and Management
Degree:	Master of Public Administration and Management in Public Administration

PROF D MAPOSA
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.

Finding solutions for Africa

Annexure: 2 Letter from the department

University of Limpopo
School of Economics and Management
Faculty of Management & Law
Department of Public Administration
Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa
Tel: (015) 268 4783 Email: martinus.selepe@ul.ac.za

Date: 28 August 2023

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam

Please be advised that Miss. Mokgwankgwa (**201602641**) is our Master of Public Administration and Management (MPAM) and her research topic is titled" **Assessing and Analysing the Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on the Effectiveness of Public Participation: A Case Study of Polokwane Local Municipality."**

Kindly allow her to collect data to enable her to expeditiously complete her studies. Your assistance will be highly appreciated.

Should you need more information, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

Yours Sincerely

Signed: _____
Dr. MM Selepe
HOD: Department of Public Administration (DoPA)

UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
2 8 AUG 2023
SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS & MANAGEMENT
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Finding solutions for Africa

Annexure 3: Letter from the Editor

UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO

Faculty: Humanities
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Department: Languages

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23 November 2023

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This letter serves to certify that I have edited a research titled: "**ASSESSING AND ANALYSING THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: A CASE STUDY OF POLOKWANE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY**" by **MAMONA MAGDELINE MOKGWANKGWA**. A version of the manuscript with the evidence of my editorial interventions has been sent to the author. Such a version can be forwarded to you upon request.

I trust you will find the editing quality in order.

Best regards

Sebola, M

DR MOFFAT SEBOLA

Annexure 4: Household Survey Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRES FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS

You are cordially invited take part in the aforementioned study undertaken to myself, Magdeline Mokgwankgwa as a part of my master degree in Public Administration and Management at the University of Limpopo. The aim of the questionnaire is to gather information on the effectiveness of public participation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Participation in this questionnaire is voluntary therefore respondents are allowed to withdraw their participation when they deem it necessary. Furthermore, the researcher vows that your rights to privacy, confidentiality and other ethical rights will be upheld and respected in this study. The findings of this study shall be used entirely for academic purpose and only by authorised personnel. The researcher greatly appreciates your participation and cooperation since the results will go a long way in improving local democracy in Polokwane Local Municipality. It is hoped that findings from this study can also be useful in other municipalities across South Africa.

Answer in the spaces provided and mark on an answer that suits you

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OF THE PARTICIPANTS

1. Gender

Male		Female	

2. Age

18-21	
22-30	

30-31	
31-40	
41-50	
51-60	
60+	

3. Race group

Black		white		coloured		Indian	

4. Education

Matric	
Higher certificate	
Diploma	
Degree	
Postgraduate	

5. Marital status

Single	
Married	
Divorced	
Separated	
Widowed	

SECTION B

EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PUBLIC PARTCIPATION DURING THECOVID-19 PANDEMIC

1. Have you ever participated in the community meetings/programmes during the COVID-19 pandemic?

yes		No	

2. Were you being supported by ward councillor in the service delivery during the pandemic?

yes		No	

3. What were your particular reasons for getting involved in the public participation during the pandemic?

☐ Concerned about the conflicts or the problems in the village

☐ An opportunity to present a point a view

☐ Feeling for civil responsibility

☐ Related to responsible duty

☐ Other

Please specify_____

CHALLENGES FACED DURING THE PANDEMIC

1. What was the worst method of communication used?

Social media	
In person	
Video conference	
Documents	

2. Do public participation programmes, such as outreach and IDP consultations accelerate service delivery?

Yes		No	

3. Do you think level of literacy in the community has an impact towards community participation in the municipal programme?

yes		No	

RECOMMENDATIONS ON POSSIBLE MEASURES FOR FUTURE PENDEMICS

1. What kind of communication channels would prefer to use if the is to be another pandemic?

In person	
Video conference	
Social media	
Instant massaging platforms	
Documents	

2. Do you think late communication or delivery of information to community has impacts towards participation in the municipal programme? If yes state why

Yes		NO	

_____
_____
_____
_____

3. What do you want the municipality to do, to ensure effective participation of communities in the municipal programme?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for your cooperation and support.

Annexure 5: Interviews

Structured interview questionnaire (Polokwane Local Municipality)

The evaluation of the success of the public participation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. What strategies of the public participation did you use during the pandemic? And please explain and give examples of your role and responsibility in the public participation?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. Where does the participation take place?

_____

_____

_____

Challenges faced by municipality during the pandemic

1. What strategy of public participation did you use at that time?

_____
_____
_____

2. Did the participation allow for developments of new ideas, learning and new way to look at the problems? If yes explain how

_____
_____
_____
_____

3. Did you have adequate time to collect, share, and reviews and distribute relevant information?

_____
_____
_____
_____

4. Were the participation process open enough to see how decision were made?

_____
_____
_____

5. What kind of method of participation do you think could have worked the best?

_____
_____
_____
_____

6. What are the barriers to effective public participation in the pandemic?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

7. What factors do you think can contribute to achieve effective public participation for future pandemic?

_____

_____

THANK YOU FOR TIME AND COOPERATION