



Community radio and youth empowerment in rural areas - An exploratory study of *Musina FM*, South Africa

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Dissertation accepted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree *Master of Arts in communication* at the North-West University

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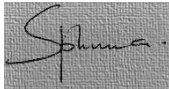
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Graduation: May 2025

DECLARATION

I, Mphumudzeni Siphuma hereby declare that “***Community radio and youth empowerment in rural areas: An exploratory study of Musina FM, South Africa***”, submitted for the purpose of *Master of Arts* degree in communication science, Faculty of Humanities, Northwest-University, is my work and has not been previously submitted by me or any other person at this or any other institution in South Africa and abroad. I further declare that this dissertation is my original work, and all relevant sources cited in this study have been duly acknowledged.

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Siphuma', on a light-colored, textured background.

27/11/2024

Mphumudzeni Siphuma

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my late brother, Thovhedzo “Gwela” Siphuma, and my late father, Frans Tshidavhusiku “Dollezar” Siphuma. You both always believed in me and encouraged me to pursue my studies, and I am proud to have honoured that wish. I hope you are looking down with pride as you rest peacefully in heaven. Your absence leaves a void, but the memories of you both will forever remain in my heart.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Throughout the process of writing this dissertation, I have been fortunate to receive invaluable support and assistance from various individuals in their respective roles. I am deeply grateful to each of them for their unwavering support. Above all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the divine power that guided me through this journey, enabling me to complete this study within the allotted time frame. For this, I give thanks to Jehovah Mudzimu wa Midzimu, the Almighty God, whose presence has been my constant strength and source of inspiration.

I extend my heartfelt appreciation to my supervisor, Dr. Chilombo Banda, who has been my supervisor throughout this journey. Your support and guidance were essential to the completion of this dissertation, and I am truly appreciative of all you have shared with me. Equally, I wish to express my sincere thanks to my Co-supervisor, Dr. Quatro Mgogo. Your support, professional expertise, and commitment to high standards have been a continuous source of motivation. Beyond your role as a supervisor, your respect and encouragement have made a profound impact on me. I will always carry with me your words of encouragement: “Tata, I know you do not like mediocrity.” These words pushed me to go beyond my limits and ensured that I completed this dissertation within the designated timeframe. Thank you, Sir, for your steadfast belief in my abilities and your invaluable guidance.

Balancing work and studying have been a challenging journey, and I am deeply grateful for the support I received along the way. I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to Sergeant Thapelo Molusi and Corporal Lebo Ramaila. Sergeant Molusi, our journey began in 2018 when you joined the 10 South African Infantry Battalion, and your mentorship since then has been invaluable. I will always remember your advice to “go back to school young man,” which I took to heart and has brought me to the submission of my master’s dissertation. Thank you for your encouragement. Corporal Ramaila, your timely arrival at the communication section was truly a blessing, and your steadfast support has been greatly appreciated. I am genuinely thankful for your kindness and consideration throughout this journey.

I would also like to sincerely thank Dr. Mooki Lobelo, the Deputy Director at School of Communication Mahikeng campus. You gave me the opportunity to join the NWU Mahikeng Campus School of Communication as a Junior Lecturer. This role has greatly enriched my teaching, learning, and research skills. I am also grateful for the chance to co-author a paper with you and for the opportunities to attend academic conferences and engage with in community activities. Your belief in me has been truly invaluable, and I deeply appreciate your support.

A special thank you goes to Miss Thato Zethi, whose love, support and encouragement have been a constant source of motivation. Your dedication and hard work inspired me to give my best, especially during the late nights spent studying on campus. Your guidance helped me overcome many challenges, and I truly appreciate the inspiration you have provided, which has driven me to continuously strive for excellence. Thank you, Mam!

My heartfelt gratitude extends to Prof. Garside for his continual support and encouragement throughout my master's studies. Your mentorship has been priceless, and I am grateful for the time and effort you invested in my academic development.

I am also deeply thankful to Dr. Musara Lubombo, the M&D Coordinator at the School of Communication, Mahikeng Campus. Your guidance and insightful advice have greatly enhanced my academic experience and been essential to my success.

To my friend, Mr. Nnditshedzen Netshiokho, your constant support and friendship have been a source of strength. I truly value our bond and appreciate your encouragement, it kept me grounded and motivated. A special thank you also goes to Mr. Saddam Mukhethwa Ramugondo for your brotherhood and support. Your comforting presence has helped me stay focused and inspired.

Lastly, I extend my heartfelt thanks to my family for their endless support and understanding. Your encouragement has meant everything to me, and I could not have completed this journey without you. To my mother, **Vhojo**, your love, patience, and belief in me have been my strength. You always knew how to uplift me, and I am so grateful for your sacrifices. To my sisters, niece, and nephew, thank you for your unwavering love and support!

Mphumudzeni Siphuma

November 27, 2024

ABSTRACT

The youth (aged 18–35) constitute almost a third of the population (17,84 million) in South Africa. Among these, the majority are ‘in the heat’. They often fall within one of three categories: uneducated, unemployed, and unemployable. In rural areas, these are exacerbated by limited access to information, educational opportunities, and infrastructure (Mlatsheni & Leibbrandt, 2011). To mitigate these issues, community radio has emerged as a key tool for community development, particularly in marginalised areas. This study explored the role of community radio in promoting youth empowerment in rural areas, with a particular focus on Musina FM in Limpopo Province of South Africa. Recent literature, Sithole (2020) indicates that financial constraints have led many community radio stations, including Musina FM, to shift their focus from serving community needs to prioritising commercialisation and advertising. This shift has impacted community radio station’s ability to fully realise its mandate of community development, particularly in promoting youth empowerment. This study builds on the premise that community radio holds significant potential for empowering youth, particularly in rural areas. It seeks to explore how Musina FM’s programmes can be harnessed to foster youth empowerment, with a particular emphasis on social and economic development in the rural areas of Musina. The study argues that, for Musina FM to effectively achieve youth empowerment in rural Musina, its programmes must be aligned with the specific needs and aspirations of the local youth population. The study adopts a qualitative research approach, collecting insights from both youth participants and Musina FM staff about the station’s contribution to youth empowerment. Data was gathered through five focus group discussions, each involving six young people from rural areas, as well as semi-structured interviews with eight (N = 8) Musina FM staff members, including the station’s programme manager, presenters, and producers. A total of thirty-eight (N = 38) participants contributed to the study. The data was analysed thematically to uncover key patterns and insights. The analysis was grounded in Zimmerman’s Empowerment Theory (2000). The findings revealed that Musina FM plays an important role in empowering young people in rural Musina by providing access to important information, education, and platforms for discussing local issues that are often overlooked by mainstream media. However, although programmes like ‘Youth to the Future’ engage young people, their impact is limited by factors such as short broadcast times and reliance on digital platforms like TikTok and Facebook. The findings further revealed a need for greater integration between community radio and online media. Furthermore, the study identified several barriers to Musina FM’s full potential, including inadequate infrastructure, perceived relevant content and unreliable internet connectivity. Another issue highlighted is the limited involvement of young people in the creation and development of radio content, which results in youth being passive participants rather than active contributors. Despite these challenges, Musina FM

continues to foster youth participation, positively influencing attitudes and encouraging engagement among young people in rural areas. In conclusion, the study recommends that Musina FM involve young people in all stages of programme development and content creation, from planning to broadcasting. It is also recommended that the station extend its broadcasting hours and expand its network reach to ensure greater access to youth empowerment programmes in rural areas. This study highlights the critical role of community radio in fostering youth empowerment in rural South Africa, despite the challenges these stations face.

Keywords: *Community Radio, Empowerment, Empowerment theory, Economic, Musina FM, Musina participatory communication, participation, programmes, rural areas, Social, youth empowerment, South Africa.*

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This qualitative study explored community radio and youth empowerment in Musina rural areas, South Africa, utilising *Musina FM* as a case study. The main aim of this study was to explore how community radio programmes facilitate youth social and economic empowerment in rural areas. Media has always been considered to be a powerful tool for societal change and it is often associated with the development of societies (Akhter & Al-Zaman, 2024). As an addition to public broadcaster and commercial media, community media is considered to be a third tier of broadcasting in South Africa, rooted within the concept of community engagement, making it a desirable tool that support, address local issues and the growth of the community through a bottom-up approach to development (Bosch, 2014; Fombad & Jiyane, 2019; Itaza, 2019; Mhagama, 2015; Mhlanga, 2016; Olorunnisola, Mohammed & Moore, 2022; Wabwire, 2013). In this context, Akhter and Al-Zaman (2024) posit that, around the globe, in both first and third-world countries, radio has been utilised to advance the needs of communities. It has a long history of gaining and growing audiences at the grassroots level in Western countries via the local, community-orientated form of Media known as “community radio” (Prahmana, Hartanto, Kusumaningtyas & Ali, 2021; Wabwire, 2013). Radio and other broadcast media are seen as potent agents of change, particularly in communities where almost all social indicators paint a negative image (Wabwire, 2013). In these instances, community media’s role in fostering social change becomes of utmost significance.

Community media, according to Buckley in UNESCO (2020); Wabwire (2013), can have both intrinsic and instrumental relevance for communities because they are key instruments for empowerment. However, there is unanimity among scholars that empowerment is a fluid term with no agreed definition. As a concept, empowerment means different things to different people and has been defined from various perspectives and the concept may have special meaning to the youth who are searching for such empowerment, this concept is debated in detail in chapter three of this dissertation, theoretical framework. However, it is important to indicate that in this study, empowerment means providing young people with the platform, information, resources and opportunities to influence their own lives. *Musina FM*, as a community radio, is charged with the mandate to develop programmes and creating content aimed at improving the social and economic wellbeing of the communities it serves (Chandra & Liang, 2017; Trivelli & Morel, 2021). Social empowerment through community radio entails involving young people in the developing,

and implementation of initiatives that motivate young people to gain confidence, develop abilities to make choices and take control of their lives while also building a sense of belonging, promote social cohesion, allowing them to play an active role in influencing their local communities (Bulani, 2021; Kankam & Attuh, 2024). On the other hand, economic empowerment means broadcasting programmes that offer training in various skills and financial literacy as well as sharing information on job opportunities and entrepreneurial opportunities (Bulani, 2021; Wabwire, 2013). As a result, this study is concerned with how community radio programmes facilitate youth empowerment in Musina, specifically focusing on social and economic empowerment in both personal and community level.

From a communication perspective, community radios can help people communicate, which is a basic human need, and because, if they play their role to the full effect, they can provide people with access to knowledge, information, social and economic power respectively. Community media's inherent value lies in its potential to help improve communication, which is essential for "self-identity and recognition by others" (Attuh & Kankam, 2024; Olorunnisola *et al.*, 2022). However, social change impacts often concentrate on the more instrumental effects of community media. Hence, community media, if used correctly, can potentially aid rural communities in achieving social change, particularly regarding youth empowerment. Community media encompasses community newspapers, television, and radio. This study sought to investigate how community radio is used to contribute into youth empowerment in rural communities such as Musina rural areas.

As noted in Nkoala and Motsathebe (2023), the year 2023 marked a significant milestone in South African media landscape, celebrating a century of radio in South Africa. In their book titled "100 years of radio in South Africa", Nkoala and Motsathebe noted that community radio played an important role in giving marginalised communities a platform and fostering inclusion ever since it was acknowledged as a part of broadcasting tier in South Africa. This signifies the importance of community radio in helping marginalised communities.

Since the 1940s, community radio has been broadcasting to rural parts of the United States to provide news and information to farmers (Forde, Foxwell & Meadows, 2002; Garnham, 2020). Since then, it has gained popularity in South Africa and other parts of the world. Community media, particularly radio and newspapers, played a vital role in South Africa's apartheid period by mobilising and educating local communities against apartheid (Dutta, 2022). As such, in South Africa, community radio initiatives have significantly contributed to societal change. The capacity of community radio programmes to reach people in underdeveloped and rural regions has aided their ability to acquire information, participate in discussions, and form views on important

problems (Olorunnisola *et al.*, 2022). This has positively impacted social change in South Africa since marginalised communities can access information and air their views on previously inaccessible issues. However, there are some communities that are still marginalised such as those in Musina rural areas who still cannot access important information which can better change their lives. Hence this study investigated the strategies that *Musina FM* can deploy in its programming to effectively bring youth empowerment in Musina rural areas.

The effective use of community radio can speed up development in poor areas, as it is a formidable alternative to public and commercial media (Dutta, 2022). It is worth noting that, as defined by the Broadcasting Act of 1993, community radio is a radio completely managed by a community or non-profit organisation and operated for non-profit objectives that serve a specific community which participates in programme selection and provision is encouraged for members of the broadcasting service's target audience, which donations, subsidies, sponsorships, advertising, or memberships may finance (Akhter & Al-Zaman, 2024; Bosch, 2014). Thus, community radio is not a tool that supports the community in a directly socially ameliorative way; rather, its purpose is to promote self-help initiatives within communities and increase the community's ability to see its challenges and potential and utilise that ability to come up with solutions (Anderson, Backhaus, Fox & Bedford, 2020). As a result, the real possible positive impact of quality community radio makes it a desirable medium to promote social change, particularly in rural areas. Consequently, this research investigated specific radio programmes at *Musina FM* which are aimed at effectively engaging and empowering young people in Musina rural areas.

In the context of South Africa, where over one-third of the populace is under the age of 35 (StasSA, 2024), young people persistently encounter numerous obstacles, including elevated rates of unemployment, as well as restricted availability of top-tier education, all of which are incited by diverse social problems such as substance abuse and criminal activities, lack of scarce skills training, and inadequate access to information and resources (Nortje & Bredenkamp, 2020). Typically, these are exacerbated in rural regions by issues such as inadequate infrastructure, destitution, and restricted access to services and opportunities and lack of governmental support. Thus, the South African youth situation paints a gloomy picture which suggests that youth empowerment is a significant concern in the country particularly in rural areas. Given these social ills plugging South African youth, one can argue that there is a need for concentrated effort to curve this pandemic. Thus, community radio can potentially play a role in addressing these issues by providing opportunities to foster open discussion to discuss critical issues and facilitating social change. Hence this study central argument is that, for *Musina FM* to achieve youth empowerment

in rural Musina, its programmes ought to be aligned with the needs of the community, particularly the young people living in the rural areas of Musina.

Literature on community radios indicates that community radio programming possesses the capacity to serve as a highly consequential instrument in empowering rural youth (The Communication Initiative Network, 2011). They may facilitate the dissemination of educational materials, raise public consciousness regarding various issues (StasSA, 2020), and offer a forum for young individuals to articulate their perspectives and engage actively in their communities. Engaging in the creation and distribution of community radio programmes and their content could potentially provide young people with valuable experiences, self-assurance, and practical knowledge that contribute to their professional, economic and personal growth. This indicates that the correct use of community radio programmes may have a significant contribution to community development, particularly regarding youth empowerment in rural areas such as the Musina region. Therefore, the effective use of *Musina FM* programmes could lead to greater youth involvement in social and economic activities, fostering youth empowerment in rural Musina.

Prior to 2011, Musina Local Municipality had no community radio station, resulting in a significant gap in access to local information and discussion forums towards community development. Most Musina residents depended on the mainstream radio, such as Phala-Phala FM and Munghana Lonene FM for information. However, these stations often addressed regional and national matters, negating rural concerns and perspectives, thereby forsaking redressal of local issues in the entire Musina. In 2011, *Musina FM*, a community radio station in the Musina Local Municipality, secured registration as a nonprofit organisation. The station obtained its broadcasting service license in December of the same year but officially commenced broadcasting in 2013. *Musina FM* claims to serve the local community by offering a sound broadcasting service tailored to their needs and interests. However, in recent years, Sithole (2020) contends that due to financial challenges, numerous community radio stations have shifted from their mission which is to serve the needs of community to focus more on advertising which is associated with commercialisation of community radio. The subject of investigation reported in this study is how the radio programmes facilitate youth empowerment to be able to 'handle the heat' as indicated in the station slogan. The stations slogan "*Can you handle the heat?*" emphasises *Musina FM* stance towards tackling complex social and economic matters and encouraging audience participation in difficult issues concerning the community. It also mirrors the stations dynamic content that urges the community to remain engaged and active (Tella, 2022). The central focus of this study is how does this transpire when it comes to youth audiences in communities the radio serves.

The station was launched to provide an opportunity for the community, including young people to identify challenges within their own communities and participate meaningfully in how best they can be addressed. *Musina FM* can be found on frequency 104.0. The station focuses on catering to the cultures and traditions of the area through its diverse programming that includes local music, community matters and discussions on socio-economic issues that are relevant to its listeners. Hence, Tella (2022) asserted that *Musina FM* has become a vital source of information for locals and a platform for engagement, inclusion, and involvement of youth in their development.

The station serves as the only radio in Musina with a coverage of 60km radius. The predominant languages at the station are Tshivenda and Sepedi, with some English plus a very small quantity of Afrikaans. The main target audience of the station consists of the local communities under Musina Local Municipality and surrounding areas (Tella, 2022). The mission of *Musina FM*, as a community radio, is to provide a platform for local voices, strive to become the go to entertainment source and a reliable outlet to promote community development and empower marginalised communities socially and economically (Itaza, 2019). This mission underscores the stations commitment to showcasing success in tackling community concerns and assisting local community into social change.

Therefore, to realise this mission, the study's position is that *Musina FM* programmes should cater to the needs and aspirations of young people with a specific focus on social and economic empowerment for youth living in rural Musina. However, the question that arise here is that, how aligned is the *Musina FM* programmes with young people's needs, aspirations and its mission? Theoretically, for this alignment to be effective, the concerned marginalised communities, in this case the young people in rural Musina, ought to be involved in all processes aimed at determining their empowerment (Molale & Fourie, 2023; Molale, 2014). The question that arises here, which is part of this study's research questions is how do youth engage and participate in *Musina FM* programmes aimed at youth empowerment?

It is in this context that *Musina FM* was selected as a perfect choice for this study. The radio station presents a unique opportunity for the investigation into how community radio programmes can be utilised to bring about youth empowerment in rural areas. The subject of community radio has received much attention in post-apartheid South Africa (Bosch, 2014; Olorunnisola *et al.*, 2022; Tsarwe, 2014; Wabwire, 2013). These studies focus much on the impact of community radio in marginalised community development. The youth, which is the focus of this study, is one of the largest marginalised communities in South Africa, constituting 37% of the population (Labour

Force, 2024). Therefore, it is important to explore how community radio programmes can be used to bring about youth empowerment in Musina rural areas.

As previously noted, extensive research has been conducted in South Africa on the role of community radio in community development. Recent studies such as Bulani (2021), Matsilele, Makwambeni, Nkoala & Bulani (2023), Odhav and Mohapanele (2018), and Pinyana (2024) have explored the role of community radio in youth empowerment, focusing particularly on semi-urban and urban areas. These studies have examined the content of community radio programmes aimed at empowering youth, but they have not fully explored the accessibility, reach, and effectiveness of these programmes in rural areas. Thus, this study aims to address this gap by identifying the barriers to effective youth empowerment through community radio especially in rural areas, which is one of the specific research questions in this study.

Community radio programmes which purport to be agents of change should provide space for participation between various stakeholders such as local government, youth empowerment agencies, and NGOs to deliberate on issues affecting community development. Hence (Akhter & Al-Zaman, 2024) opined that, the essence of community radio is rooted in the concept of empowerment, which highlights the importance of participation, bottom-up approach, collaboration, dialogue, mutual learning and cultural identity in planning and involving stakeholders to engage, identify and tackle their challenges using community-driven approaches and structures. Therefore, this study adopted empowerment theory as the underpinning and analytic lens. Empowerment theory helps to explain how community radio shows, like in the case of *Musina FM*, can transform the lives of the youth in rural areas. It emphasises communities' need for diversity and being inclusive to everyone to jointly work together to achieve a common goal through dialogue for empowerment.

As a dialogue-based approach, empowerment theory posits that the emancipation of communities is possible through promoting *participation* as a means for empowerment. Thus, empowering initiatives advocate for engaging beneficiaries of change through *participation* in the processes of their development. This can be achieved through *dialogue* for *empowerment* while considering *cultural diversity* (Carpentier, 2018). Not only participation entail the sharing of information and experiences, but it also involves the inquiry and production of new knowledge to address improvement-required conditions. Participation as a means of empowerment is often associated with community-driven development which allows people to be at the centre of the development. Thus, empowerment can be achieved through the process or as an outcome. However, as a process, it may be used at any level of decision-making (consultation, planning, implementation, and evaluation) regardless of the number of persons involved (Carpentier, 2018). From this

theoretical perspective, *Musina FM* ought to provide a dialogical space for young people to participate in the development of community radio programmes and use such programmes to improve their own lives.

1.2 Problem statement

The recent Quarterly Labour Force Survey (2024) indicates that South African youth has been marginalised from social and economic empowerment which are proliferated in rural areas by poor access to information and resources, unemployment, poverty, and inadequate education, and skills development options (StasSA, 2024). In rural areas, young people are typically excluded from economic and social engagement, making it hard for them to express their concerns and shape their own lives. These issues are especially acute in poor and neglected places like rural Musina, where knowledge and resources are few. In such areas, lack of youth involvement platforms perpetuates poverty, criminality, and social alienation.

Community radio has been widely acknowledged as an instrument, for fostering community development especially in marginalised areas with limited access to mainstream media (Bush Radio, 2021). While community radios are intended not to be profit driven, Sithole, (2020) contends that in recent time, there has been noticeable trend in South Africa where most of community radio stations have strayed away from their primary goal of servicing their own community shifting towards advertising which is associated with commercialisation of community radio. Thus, stations may struggle to fulfil their broadcasting mandate as they focus on programming that attracts advertisers. Scholars lament that this shift has seen community radio focusing on serving their funders through advertising / commercialisation (Bosch, 2014; Sithole, 2020). Some community radio stations broadcast programmes and content which resemble those of commercial radio stations. This is compounded by donor dependency by most community radio stations, which in some instances affect their independence (Pavarala & Malik, 2007; Verma, 2023).

The above shift undermines the initial role of community radio which is to promote empowerment through broadcasting programmes that socially and economically uplift people's lives through access and participation. Community participation and accessibility are essential aspects of community radio programming (Onyenakeya & Salawu, 2023). Other fundamentals include residents' ownership, control, and power distribution, which empower people to exert control over their communities' communication networks (O'Cadiz, 2018). Community radio and its programmes are distinguished from commercial, public, and private radios by these characteristics. As such, community radio programmes are expected to be guided by principles

of participation and democratic values that are geared toward social concerns rather than financial maximisation (Carpentier, 2018). The premise in this study is that *Musina FM* may not be immune to this criticism. Does it really fulfil its goal of empowering the community it serves? Using *Musina FM*, a community radio station found in the Musina Local Municipality of Limpopo Province in South Africa, this study evaluated the usability of community radio programming in promoting and supporting youth empowerment in the Musina region specifically focusing on social and economic empowerment. The central argument of this study is that, for *Musina FM* to achieve youth empowerment (that is fulfil its mandate) in rural Musina, its programmes ought to be aligned with the needs of the community, particularly the young people. While community radio's potential for empowerment contexts has been acknowledged, in rural areas like Musina, studies are not enough since most existing studies have concentrated on urban or semi-urban settings (Bulani, 2021; Mohapanele, 2017; Pinyana, 2024), with little attention paid to the unique challenges faced by rural youth. Therefore, this study aimed to fill this gap through investigating how *Musina FM* programmes facilitate youth empowerment in Musina rural areas.

1.2.1 General research question

Based on the arguments and problems identified regarding community radio and youth empowerment in rural areas, the following general research question is posed.

How can community radio programmes be utilised to bring youth empowerment in rural communities in South Africa?

1.2.2 Specific research questions

In the quest to answer the above research question, the following specific research questions were pursued:

1. Which specific radio programmes on *Musina FM* most effectively engage and empower the youth in Musina rural areas?
2. How do *Musina FM* programmes empower youth through engagement and participation?
3. How do youth in Musina rural areas respond and benefit from *Musina FM* programmes in terms of knowledge, attitudes and behaviours?
4. What barriers hinder effective youth empowerment through *Musina FM* in the rural areas of Musina?
5. What strategies can *Musina FM* employ to improve youth empowerment in Musina rural areas?

1.2.3 Research objectives

To provide a solution to previously stated general research question and specific research questions, *Musina FM* programmes were explored through interviews with *Musina FM* employees and focus group discussions with young people in Musina in the quest to address the below-mentioned objectives emanating from the above questions:

1. To explore *Musina FM* programmes aimed at youth empowerment in Musina rural areas through semi-structured interviews with the station employees.
2. To explore how the *Musina FM* programmes engage and empower the youth through its content, style, and delivery via focus group discussions with young people in Musina rural areas.
3. To understand how the youth responds and benefits from *Musina FM* programmes in terms of their knowledge, attitude, and behaviour through focus group discussion with the youth residing in Musina rural region.
4. To identify the barriers hindering effective youth empowerment in rural areas through *Musina FM* using semi-structured interviews with *Musina FM* employees.
5. To determine the strategies that *Musina FM* can employ to improve youth empowerment through focus group discussions with youth and semi-structured interviews with the employee of the station.

1.3 Location of the study

This research utilised *Musina FM* found in Musina Local Municipality, as a case study. Musina is a small town located in the Limpopo province of South Africa, near Beit Bridge border post. The Beit Bridge border post is the biggest port of entry in South Africa, separating The Republic of South Africa and The Republic of Zimbabwe. Musina Local Municipality has a total of 12 wards with a mix of rural villages, rural-urban, and urban areas (StasSA, 2020). For this study, young people from only seven wards situated in rural areas were considered to make up the study population. This is in line with the research question of the study, which seeks to find out how community radio programmes can be utilised to bring youth empowerment to rural communities in the Musina rural areas.

According to Stats SA (2020), the Musina Local Municipality has a population of approximately 130,000 people. Amongst the latter number, youth aged between the range of 15-35 contribute a significant portion of around 58,000, amounting to 45% of the population (Labour Force, 2024). The predominant languages in the area are Tshivenda and Sepedi, with some English and a very

small segment of Afrikaans (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2017). The main economic activity of rural Musina is primarily agriculture, with many residents engaged in subsistence farming or small-scale commercial farming (Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries, 2018).

The population of the area face challenges such as limited access to basic services like healthcare, education and sanitation, as well as high levels of unemployment and poverty. In Musina rural areas, issues such as lack of access to information and resources limit young people's opportunity to receive adequate information related to educational and employment opportunities. The community is close-knit, with strong social bonds and a sense of solidarity (Kagan, Burton, Duckett, Lawthom & Siddiquee, 2020; Mohapanele, 2017). The area has a respected traditional leaders who play a significant role in community decision-making and governance (Oyo-Ita, Bosch-Capblanch, Ross, Oku, Esu, Ameh & Meremikwu, 2021).

1.4 Theoretical lens guiding the study

The thesis of this dissertation is that, for *Musina FM* to achieve youth empowerment in rural Musina, its programmes ought to be aligned with the needs of the community, particularly the young people. But how can community radio shows, like in the case of *Musina FM*, empower the youth in rural areas? Mark Zimmerman's (2000) Empowerment theory is summoned here as an underpinning framework to explain this process. The theory emphasises communities' need for diversity and being inclusive to everyone to jointly work together to achieve a common goal through participation for empowerment (Rappaport, 1987; Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995).

The empowerment theory stresses the importance of individuals and communities actively engaging in activities that enable them to gain access to resources and contribute to decision making processes for their development (Cattaneo & Chapman, 2010). Rappaport (1987) elaborates on empowerment theory, emphasising the significance of respectful, caring and reflective participation that empowers people and communities to take charge of their resources and personal circumstances. The idea is in line with participation concept which plays a central role in the empowerment of stakeholders by highlighting the importance of inclusive conversations embracing cultural differences and collaborations (Servaes, 2008). Empowerment theory advocate for bottom-up approach to development, criticising the traditional top-down approach to development and emphasising the value of local knowledge and community-driven initiatives (White, 2003). Additionally, the ideas of mutual learning and skill development are integrated into this theory, creating an atmosphere where people are not just passive participants but active agent of change in the process of their development (Freire, 2000).

In this study, empowerment theory serves as the basis for understanding how young people residing in Musina rural areas can take control of community radio programmes in order to improve their socio-economic situation. The theory provides useful methods to involve youth through dialogue and collaborative creation of content. This theory points out how people can gain confidence and skills for their own development (Cattaneo & Chapman, 2010; White, 2023) and how youth participation in community development leads to community empowerment (Narayan, 2002; Servaes, 2008). This is because community radio acts as a bridge, between these two forms of empowerment by allowing young people to drive change while also nurturing their personal capabilities (McKee, 2016; Gumucio Dagron & Tufte, 2006). Therefore, this theory was chosen as a single theory to underpin and guide the study because it covers all aspects required in the process of empowerment.

Accordingly, the term empowerment is in some instances in this study used interchangeably with participation. This is not least because participation is a central concept of empowerment – understood either as a process to, or an outcome. This theory is explored, debated and justified in chapter three of this dissertation, theoretical framework. The theoretical analysis of this study emphasises the need for community radio programmes to involve young people in all stages of participation through dialogue, which is aimed at empowering young people while considering their different cultural beliefs, hence the central focus of this study: how can community radio programmes be utilised to empower young people residing in rural South Africa, especially in rural areas of Musina?

1.5 Research methodology

This study employed a qualitative research approach, which is exploratory in nature because it seeks to acquire as much pertinent data as practically possible concerning the research problem and to generate novel ideas for the investigation. Thus, in the context of this study, which aims to investigate the utilisation of community radio programmes on youth empowerment in rural areas, the interpretivism research paradigm informed the study since it enables the researcher to probe and understand participants' experiences, perspectives, views, opinions, challenges and strategies, as well as the content and role of the radio programmes themselves.

The researcher used a multifaceted approach for data collection, including semi-structured interviews with eight ($n=8$) *Musina FM* employees and focus group discussions with thirty ($n=30$) youth from rural areas of Musina. A total of thirty-eight participants ($N=38$) were purposefully selected due to their in-depth knowledge and experiences concerning the utilisation of community radio programmes for youth empowerment in rural Musina. The study employed a theoretical

analysis of how the principles of empowerment theory are applied in *Musina FM* programmes to explain how community radio programmes can be used to empower youth in rural Musina.

1.6 Significance of the study

In recent times, South Africa has been experiencing an upward unemployment trend, rising from 32,7% to 32,9%, recording the highest unemployment rate in the world, with the youth unemployment rate amounting to 50,7% (Labour Force, 2024). In rural areas, these statistics are worsened by issues such as poverty, lack of skills development, lack of infrastructure, and lack of access to information and resources. Therefore, in rural areas, community radio becomes a platform that can aid youth in social change through the provision of communication space that assists youth in identifying issues affecting them and coming up with solutions to such issues. This study offers the chance to collect valuable data by conducting a comprehensive examination of the programming and content of community radio stations in rural areas, with the results being generalised to comprehend the demand for community radio stations in South Africa. Thus, the study will aid community radio stations in bringing about social and economic youth empowerment through their broadcasts.

In addition, the community, particularly the youth, will benefit from this research because individuals will have a greater understanding of how they can use community radio to enhance their participation in community development. Moreover, the research findings will help community leaders determine how to use the community radio station to increase young people's participation in the development process. The radio station will also benefit from this research, as it will provide insight into how *Musina FM's* programmes can be tailored to promote youth empowerment in the rural areas of Musina, in line with the community radio's mandate for community development. The study will contribute to the ongoing debates on how community media, particularly community radio and empowerment theory can be employed to enhance youth empowerment in rural areas. It will further contribute to the literature by providing insights as to how development communication researchers, especially on community radio across South Africa and the globe can apply empowerment as a single theory guiding the study to promote youth empowerment in rural areas through community radio.

Finally, government and local municipalities, as the custodians of community development, NGOs and other agents of change, will be able to determine how they can improve the services offered by community radios in terms of empowering the youth and bringing about social change in the community.

1.7 Defining key concepts of the study

Community radio: The term community radio in South Africa is described as the medium initiated and controlled by the community and offer service to a certain community it serves and located while it provides a space for the community to identify challenges and come up with solutions to address such challenges. Thus, Henderson (2022) defined a community radio as a type of radio station that serves a specific geographic community or population, often with a focus on local content, perspectives and needs.

Community radio programming: Henderson (2022) posited that community radio programming refers to the content and shows broadcast on community radio stations, which are designed to serve the needs and interests of the local community in which the station is owned and controlled.

Communication for social change: Servaes and Malikhao (2005) posited that communication for social change refers to the use of communication processes, strategies and techniques to bring about positive social change. Watts and Flanagan (2007) stated that it involves empowering individuals and communities to act on social issues, challenge unjust systems and promote human rights.

Cultural identity: Hall (1993) defined cultural identity as the sense of belonging and connection to a particular cultural group, shaped by shared values, beliefs, customs, language and history. In the context of the study, cultural identity refers to recognising that Musina rural presents a diverse community with different backgrounds; as a result, the community radio station should recognise this aspect and, therefore, accommodate the diversified population by using various languages in their broadcasts.

Dialogue: Habermas and Greniman (2013) defined dialogue as a form of communication where individuals or groups engage in a reciprocal and respectful exchange of ideas, perspectives and experiences. In the context of the study, dialogue is seen as a development tool in which young people and stakeholders come together to converse on challenges facing young people and reach a solution. In this instance, the end goal of dialogue should be empowerment.

Empowerment: Watts and Flanagan (2007) defined empowerment as the process of enabling individuals or groups to gain control over their lives, make informed decisions and take action to achieve their goals and aspirations. In this study, empowerment refers to allowing young people to take control of community radio programmes and come up with programmes that help them to improve their lives through acquiring skills, knowledge and building confidence.

Economic empowerment: Means broadcasting programmes that offer training in various skills and financial literacy as well as sharing information on job opportunities and entrepreneurial opportunities (Bulani, 2021; Wabwire, 2013).

Social empowerment: Social empowerment entails involving young people in the implementation of initiatives that motivate young people to gain confidence, develop abilities to make choices and take control of their lives while also build sense of belonging promote social cohesion, allowing them to play an active role in influencing their local communities (Ntini & Kent, 2024; Rappaport, 1987).

Youth: UNESCO (2020) stated that youth refer to the stage of life between childhood and adulthood, characterised by physical, emotional and social transition. The United Nations defined youth as individuals between the ages of 15 and 35 (United Nations, 2015). In this study, youth refer to young people between the ages of 18 and 35.

Youth empowerment: Watts and Flanagan (2007) defined youth empowerment as the process of enabling young people between the age of 18-35 to take control of their lives, make informed decisions and become active participants in the process that concerns their lives.

Participatory communication: Lubombo (2015) opined that participatory communication refers to a communication approach that involves the active participation of stakeholders, particularly marginalised or underrepresented groups, in the communication process.

Participation: Watts and Flanagan (2007) defined participation as the active involvement of individuals or groups in decision-making processes, activities or events. Furthermore, it states that people should be involved in all stages, including planning, design, implementation, and evaluation in the development process that concerns their lives. In the context of the study, participation refers to the involvement of young people in the initial stage of developing community radio programmes, participating in these programmes as active participants.

1.8 Dissertation outline

Emanating from the statement of problem, this dissertation seeks to answer the main research question, which seeks to find out how community radio programmes can be utilised to bring about social and economic empowerment to young people residing in rural areas in the Musina region. The thesis of this dissertation is that, for *Musina FM* to achieve youth empowerment in rural Musina, its programmes ought to be aligned with the needs of the community, particularly the young people. It should provide a dialogical space for young people to participate in the

development of community radio programmes and use such programmes to improve their own lives. This dissertation is divided into six (6) chapters as outlined below:

Chapter One: Introduction and background of the study

This chapter introduces the study by providing a background to and context of community radio programmes. The chapter presents the problem statement centred around **how community radio programmes can be utilised to bring youth empowerment in rural communities in South Africa**. The chapter also highlights the qualitative methodology employed to address the research questions, and how Marc Zimmerman's (2000) empowerment theory is utilised as an analytical theory in the study. The chapter introduces the main argument that for *Musina FM to achieve youth empowerment in rural Musina, its programmes ought to be aligned with the needs of the community, particularly the young people*. This thesis is treated in subsequent chapters.

Chapter Two: Community radio and youth empowerment: Literature review

This chapter of the study provides a detailed history of community radio, as well as a review of the academic studies that preceded this research, touching on relevant aspects of the community radio, participation, and youth empowerment. The chapter engages the preceding and current studies on community radio and its potential as a tool for social transformation. The chapter further explain the concept of youth empowerment and its dimensions.

Chapter Three: Theoretical foundations of empowerment: A theoretical framework

This chapter begin with debating the concept of empowerment from various discipline building up to development communication which this study is locate. The value of orientation and theory of orientation within empowerment theory are also discussed. The chapter covered concepts such as participation, dialogue, empowerment, and cultural identity to demonstrate how these principles of empowerment theory are applied by the community radio for the betterment of the communities they serve. The application of empowerment theory in the study seeks to demonstrate that community radio, as a tool for development, should provide a dialogical space between the young people in Musina rural areas and stakeholders with the intent to empower young people. This chapter synthesises existing knowledge, identifies gaps, and establishes theoretical frameworks or concepts to guide the research design and data analysis.

Chapter Four: Qualitative research methodology

This chapter discussed and presented qualitative research methodology that this study adopted. It further provided the study's research design, the research approach that the study utilised to carry out the investigation, detailing the study's population, the data collection tools, and data analysis methods that were used in the execution of the study. The chapter further explains the interpretivism paradigm, which informs the qualitative research approach used in the study. Data collection instruments such as semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were also outlined. This chapter concludes by indicating the process in which the inductive thematic analysis approach was used to analyse data while providing the steps in dealing with ethical clearance.

Chapter Five: Data presentation and discussion of findings

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study, addressing the research questions related to the role of community radio in youth empowerment in rural areas. The findings indicate that *Musina FM*'s programmes contribute to empowering rural youth, although challenges such as poor network connectivity and limited radio coverage hinder their full potential. Programmes like *Youth to the Future* support economic empowerment, while *Mulisa wa Ndele* and *Tshidziki Tsha Mafhungo* assist young people in overcoming personal challenges and building spiritual resilience. However, limited time allocation within these programmes restricts meaningful youth participation and engagement with critical issues affecting their lives. Data from focus group discussions further suggest that while young people benefit from listening to *Musina FM*, it remains unclear whether these programmes significantly improve their overall quality of life. The chapter concludes by emphasising that for community radio to effectively empower rural youth, a bottom-up approach in programme development is essential. This would ensure that the content is more responsive to the needs and realities of the community it serves.

Chapter Six: Summary, conclusion, and recommendations

The findings and conclusion chapter highlights that *Musina FM*'s youth empowerment programmes play a crucial role in promoting socio-economic and personal growth among rural youth in Musina. These programmes foster active engagement and positive behavioural changes. However, challenges such as limited government support, inadequate infrastructure, restricted geographical reach, and budget constraints hinder their full effectiveness. To enhance impact, the study recommends expanding these initiatives to include specialised programmes focused on

skills development, financial literacy, and career guidance. This would better equip young people with practical skills, enabling them to apply insights gained from the programmes more effectively in real-life situations. The chapter concludes with practical recommendations for improving the operations and programming of community radio stations. Additionally, it suggests potential avenues for future research, encouraging other scholars to build on these findings and explore further ways to strengthen community-based youth empowerment initiatives

1.9 Conclusion

This chapter introduced the study and set the foundation by presenting the background of the study and its setting. The chapter also presented the main aim of this study, which is to explore the role of community radio programmes on rural youth's social and economic empowerment. It further presented the statement of the problem, questions that the study seeks to answer, research objectives, significance of the study, and the location of the study. The next chapter reviews literature related to community radio, participation and youth empowerment.

CHAPTER TWO

COMMUNITY RADIO, YOUTH EMPOWERMENT, AND PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided the introduction and contextual background of the study as well as the research questions that seeks to answer the identified problem, setting a stage and determining the relevance of the dissertation. Therefore, this chapter provides an in-depth review of the existing literature on the role of community radio in promoting youth empowerment, with a particular focus on rural areas. Community radio, as a medium, is recognised for its social significance and its contribution to community development by providing platforms for marginalised communities to participate in discussions that affect their lives. The chapter begins with a historical overview of the development of community radio both globally and within South Africa, establishing its role in enabling youth empowerment and community development. It then amplifies radio's importance as a tool for fostering social change, particularly in rural contexts, highlighting some key strategies and case studies.

2.2 History of community radio

As defined in the introductory chapter of this dissertation, community media according to the Broadcasting act of 1993 refers to third tier of broadcasting that is owned, controlled and governed by the community. As such community radio serves as a development tool that help communities achieve social change. It is therefore important to provide a narrative review of the historical development of community radio in and around the globe as narrated below.

2.2.1 Global historic account of community radio

Community radio broadcasting likely began in 1910, when American stations sent weather updates, news summaries, and market information through coded broadcasts (Cadiz, 2015). It was the Wagner-Hatfield Act, however, that led to the proliferation of stations with educational, religious, agricultural, labour, or non-profit programming (Cadiz, 2015). The first pirate station in the United States began broadcasting in 1983 (Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 2019). These broadcasts and the information they provided to American farmers were progressive in character. Community Radio has long had a tight relationship with farming since it provided a cost-effective means of disseminating information across huge areas. It is comprehensible that community radio

would ultimately serve as a developmental communication tool, especially for community participation to bring social change.

In nations with a history of colonial domination, South America has the first evidence of community radio (Lingela, 2018). The clandestine broadcasts by Bolivian miners using homemade radio equipment on a station nicknamed "Radio Sucre" were among the earliest community radio transmissions in non-Western countries. Beyond Latin America, the developing world had essentially no community radio experiences, and it was not until the 1990s that community radio started in Asia (Howley, 2015).

In 1991, the Philippines initiated the Tambuli project, which was another ground-breaking community radio initiative in Asia (Mwangi, 2018). Nepal is considered the pioneer of community radio in Asia since it was one of the first nations in the region to launch community radio in 1997 after the country experienced democratic revolution (Mwangi, 2018). In India, one of the genuine heavyweights of Asia, community radio just began in 2008 (Mwangi, 2018). In comparison to community radio in South America, community radio in Asia and Africa is quite new.

Community radio in Africa has evolved through various historical and socio-political contexts, playing a significant role in both empowerment and conflict resolution. Community radio, for example in East Africa has played an important role to promote dialogue and reconciliation especially in the post genocide era of Rwanda. Some studies including Mugiraneza (2021) found that while some community radio stations were created to incite violence, others emerged in an attempt to promote reconciliation and social cohesion. This dual nature of community radio, according to Nkurunziza (2022), indicates the great potential that community radio can exert towards dividing the nation but also uniting societal groups with one another to achieve social change.

In West Africa, the emergence of community radio in countries like Mali and Benin post-revolution reflects its role in democratisation and grassroots mobilisation. Community radio has played a crucial role in allowing the voice for marginalised communities, advocating on issues of local governance, health and education (Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 2019). This demonstrates that community radio has the ability of empowering citizens and encouraging civic engagement. Academic studies on how community radio has been utilised for improving livelihoods of people whilst underlining its role within democratic processes taking place within the region has been extensively documented as in (Owusu, 2023) who find out that in countries like Mali, community radio was established around 1991 after the country experienced revolution (Fraser & Restrepo-

Estrada, 2019) while in 1992 Benin followed suit after its democratic revolution as pointed out in (Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada, 2019).

In North Africa, however, the reality is quite different as community radio has frequently fallen victim to persecution from authoritarian governments. Despite of these challenges, efforts have arisen to utilise community radio as an advocacy and social change tool in practice particularly in countries such as Egypt and Tunisia post-Arab Spring (El-Nawawy, 2020). These efforts are a clear indication of the commitment of community media to accord voice to the marginalised, creditability to public discourse and challenge the authority.

In Southern Africa, South Africa's establishment community radio in 1993 however the first legally licensed community radio station started operating in 1994 after the first democratic elections, marking a significant milestone. The country's post-apartheid landscape has seen community radio flourish as a vehicle for social justice and cultural expression (Moyo, 2021). However, the sector faces challenges such as funding and regulatory constraints, which can limit its potential for broader impact (Makhura, 2023). This paints a clear picture which indicates that, although community radio has been shaped by the legacy of apartheid, it has been a major player in fostering social change in post-apartheid era particularly in marginalised communities. However, an issue such as regulatory framework and funding of community radio remains an obstacle that hinders its growth. Hence this study seeks to address these problems through exploring the utilisation of community radio programmes for youth empowerment in line with the mandate and the mission of community radio in South Africa. In light of these views, the following section provides an in-depth discussion of community radio in South Africa.

2.2.2 Historical context of community radio in South Africa

In South Africa, the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa regulates community radio, which is considered to the third tier of broadcasting, along with public and commercial radio. Community radio's community ownership, governance, and operation make it unique, according to ICASA (2023). Community radio promotes community engagement, local development, and empowerment by providing information that meets community needs and interests. This makes Community radio a crucial for social cohesion and underprivileged populations' voices. Community radio in South Africa serves the public rather than profit. Its programming reflects local values, culture, and goals. These characteristics makes community radio an excellent medium for participatory communication, since it is owned, governed, controlled and includes all community members (Oosthuizen, 2016).

South Africa had limited broadcasting prospects before democracy in 1994 due to government control of the airwaves. Before the inception of democracy, publications were the main alternative medium since they were cheaper and simpler to produce. In the attempt to introduce community radio in the 1990s, Cape Town activists and students challenged the apartheid government's broadcasting monopoly through Bush radio, which was twice denied broadcasting licenses in 1993, while the government approved right-wing stations (Gondwe & Mavindidze, 2018). Bush Radio responded with an unlawful broadcast on April 25, 1993, which was soon shut down by the police, marking a turning point in the fight for free community radio as pointed in (Gondwe & Mavindidze, 2018).

The 1994 democratic transition changed the South African broadcasting landscape. The newly elected administration created the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) to regulate national broadcasting. As a result, Maritzburg Radio was the first community radio station to receive the first IBA community radio license in December 1994, followed by Bush Radio in 1995 (Muswede, 2015). Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) superseded the IBA in 2000, responsible for licensing community broadcasting strictly. Based on ICASA's licence requirements, community radio stations must be accessible, community-driven, and inclusive to get a community radio license (Muswede, 2015). Furthermore, the programmes of such stations should emanate from the community for community development. This demonstrates that radio is a vital part of the community development. Moreover, ICASA's regulations also serve to provide a legal framework to stations like *Musina FM* to legally operate and ensure community participation and development. This research study utilised *Musina FM* as a case study to show the importance of community radio in South Africa through empowering local voices, enhancing empowerment and fostering participatory communication for youth empowerment.

Therefore, *Musina FM* needs to be deeply rooted in its community. The station should address local issues such as youth empowerment, education and health care which are often discussed by mainstream media but lacks in community focus. This demonstrates that Community radio such as *Musina FM* may be used to socially and economically empower marginalised community members and contribute positively to society by discussing local issues like indicated in the literature (see Banda, 2021).

In South Africa there is clear evidence that community radio illustrates the significance of social justice and community development. Thus, community radio stations are indebted to their communities according to Regulatory bodies such as ICASA, which ensures that community radio stations remain accountable to the communities they broadcast in through their programming. As a result, it is the argument of this study that, for *Musina FM* to realise its mission of aiding people

into social change, its programmes must align with the broader objectives and needs of the community since this form of broadcasting encompasses ideas rooted in empowerment and participatory communication. It is therefore important that the next section of this chapter addresses South Africa's community radio regulatory environment which stations like *Musina FM* should comply with, showing how *Musina FM* can maintain its role in encouraging youth and community engagement in rural areas through its programming.

2.2.2.1 Regulatory frameworks and governance of community radio in South Africa

In South Africa, community radio stations operation and governance are guided by a legal framework to ensure proper management and adherence to regulations set by (ICASA, 2020). ICASA outline that community radio stations are expected to tailor their programmes to address the needs and desires of the local community they serve. Hence, this study highlights the importance of aligning *Musina FM*s programming with the needs of the Musina community to promote youth empowerment effectively and cater to the interests of young people living in Musina rural areas. For *Musina FM* to achieve this, adhering and executing these legal frameworks is crucial in order to uphold its mandate. Hence the literature on community radio regulation is reviewed in this section.

The regulation of community radio in South Africa is firmly rooted within the socio-political history of the country, particularly in post-apartheid media democratisation struggles. The regulatory framework was established to achieve adequate representation and democratise broadcasting in response to apartheid's media authoritarianism. This, according to Berger (2002: 501), marked a significant transformation in national broadcasting and the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) has been vital as an actor that played a part in enforcing community radio broadcasting standards, as well as broadcast ethics, along with diversity and representation. ICASA helped shatter the state-controlled media monopoly and allow community-led broadcasting. It is important to mention that prior the establishment of ICASA in the 2000s, broadcasting was regulated by the Independent Broadcasting Act of 1993 which played a major role in formalising community radio through awarding Maritzburg radio the first community radio license.

Community radio stations must be non-profit entities administered by and for their communities, prioritising community interests above commercial gain, as per ICASA rules and regulations. As stipulated in ICASA rules and regulations, community radio stations must play at least 60% locally generated content to establish a strong relationship with local communities and reflect local identities and promote cultural representation. This signifies the importance of the locality as studies

such as Fairbairn and Goodman (2007) suggest that these rules are necessary to keep community radio from becoming too commercial and to preserve its objective of community service. This is important for community radio station such as *Musina FM* because adhering to this regulation will ensure that the radio programming reflects the community it serves rather than being commercialised as point by Sithole (2020) who is of a view that majority of community radios has shifted their focus from serving as a tool for community development to commercialisation.

Hence ICASA's regulatory system has been a subject of criticism. According to Tomaselli and Teer-Tomaselli (2001), although ICASA's goals are good, its rules are uneven, pointing out lack of enforcement and that community radio stations have broken programming and advertising rules without consequence. Tomaselli and Teer-Tomaselli (2001) further indicate that these enforcement breaches might damage community radio and cause stations to stray from their mission. However, Hadland and Thorne (2004) claim that ICASA has protected the community radio movement from commercialisation pressures by providing a legal framework that guides community radios operations. These demonstrate that regardless of its shortfalls, ICASA's programming standards have kept stations like *Musina FM* focused on local socio-economic concerns including youth unemployment and education.

Governance of community radio stations has changed along with regulatory frameworks. In the past, most community stations were started and run by volunteers without broadcasting expertise. This made operations and programming difficult. However, a study conducted by Bosch (2014) notes that recently professional management of community radio has increased community radio station efficiency but has also raised questions about whether it affects community-driven governance as stipulated by the regulatory body. According to Carpentier (2018) and Banda (2021) professionalism in governance may diminish community radio's participatory aspect by shifting decision-making from community members to professionals, Therefore, *Musina FM* must blend professional management with its mission to empower local youth via content production and decision-making.

Funding is crucial to community radio governance. Most community radio stations are non-profit and depend on donations, grants, and restricted advertising. In light to this, Moyo (2012) warns that overreliance on external financing might weaken a station's independence and leave it subject to outside pressures. Funders may urge stations to emphasise their own agendas above community-focused programming. This has been cited as the main problem in this study, indicating that community radios that are faced with funding challenge may swift away from their original mission. Thus, in a resource-constrained climate, *Musina FM*, like most community radio

in South Africa, struggles to secure sustainable financing without sacrificing its purpose to assist young people and the community. Therefore, the station should balance these influences to keep its emphasis on young empowerment via interactive programming. Hence this study is concerned with finding out how *Musina FM* programmes aid youth into social and economic empowerment.

South African community radio regulations and governance protect autonomy, diversity, and representation. These frameworks function if they are enforced, and community radio stations can blend professional governance with community engagement. As a case study, *Musina FM* shows the regulatory system's strengths and weaknesses. *Musina FM* should prioritise local programming and community service while dealing with governance and financing difficulties that threaten its survival. *Musina FM* must comply with regulations and innovate in governance and financial independence to empower young people residing in rural areas in Musina. The discussion on the regulatory framework provided a clear picture of how community radio is regulated in South Africa especially in post-apartheid era, demonstrating the significance of holding community radios accountable to community they serve. As a result, it is important that the following section deals with the evolution as well as the importance of community radio in South African context.

2.2.2.2 The evolution and importance of Community radio in South Africa

Community radio, although a worldwide phenomenon, has distinct subtleties and roots in the South African environment. Community radio in South Africa started during the latter stages of the apartheid period, and its initial focus was on providing an alternative media to government-sponsored propaganda while also upholding democratic ideals and encouraging open lines of dialogue.

In South Africa, community radios proliferated after apartheid's end because the airwaves were liberalised. According to Horwitz (2001), the Independent Broadcasting Act of 1993 and the establishment of the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) in 2000 marked a significant turning point for community radio in South Africa throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. These establishment goals were to advance justice and equality in the media and telecommunications industries in South Africa.

In this regard, community radio has been essential in providing a voice for the many groups and cultures found in South Africa, particularly in the rural areas. According to Tomaselli (2003), they have developed from straightforward channels for information transfer to platforms for cross-cultural communication, which reflects the diversity of South African culture. Similarly, in his study,

Tomaselli (2014) makes a similar case, stating that community radios serve to bridge the information gap between urban and rural regions and connect underprivileged communities like rural Musina in the Limpopo Province of South Africa.

However, not every study believes in the evolution of the community radio in South Africa. According to Moeng (2008), many community radio stations have been commercialised, which contradicts their original aim of supporting participatory democracy and providing a voice to the voiceless. Similarly, Chiumbu (2012) asserts that commercial and entertainment material has superseded social and developmental content of community radio programming. These studies back up the issue highlighted in this study which suggest that this change could potentially lead community radio stations away from their goal of community service. Despite these critiques, it is impossible to overstate the value of local radio stations, they are important in maintaining indigenous languages and cultural traditions, as well as in empowering the young population, particularly in rural areas. According to Ramaema (2016), community radios in rural regions offers programming that educates young people about leadership roles in the community and promotes their engagement in civic life which not only empowers them to better their own lives but also assists a greater community. Hence this study sought to find out how *Musina FM* programmes contribute to empowering young people in rural areas through engagement and participation.

South African community radio has formed significant partnerships with non-governmental organisations and local governments to expand its effect in areas such as education, health, and civic participation. Hence as Bosch (2014) demonstrates how such collaborations have increased community engagement and provided listeners with a feeling of connection and purpose. This indicates community radio is more than simply a form of entertainment but a tool that can be used to facilitate community development. As a result, it is significant for this study, in the next section to review literature related to community radio and community development.

2.3 Community radio and community development

People think of "community radio" as the third level of radio, after public and commercial radio. This is because it is run by the people in the community to serve their own interests and goals (Nirmala, 2015:23). In the UK, Access and participation through community radio are important since it gives people who do not normally have a say, like landless farmers, people who live in shacks and labour unions, a chance to have their voice heard (Sharma, 2018). The Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) in South Africa made sure that communities can set up and run their own broadcasting services. This lets them voice their concerns and hopes without outside influence as pointed out in (Rama & Louw, 2018), emphasising the relationship between

community radio and community development. Community radio has two different goals: doing good in the community and providing a platform for people to engage in matters concerning their lives. These goals are not at odds with each other, because they both help the station play a bigger part in community growth as (Sharma, 2018) pointed out.

Community radio as a non-profit organisation that is owned and run by the community, its goal should meet the needs of the area they serve rather than focusing on advertising and making money (Rolls, 2018:8). Rolls further indicates that community radio's programming is mainly about local issues, preserving culture, and giving people in the community more power. This is very different from public radio, which broadcasts what the government thinks is best for the people, and private radio, which is heavily commercialised and mainly funded by advertisement (Rolls, 2018:9). Listeners interact with the material and add to talks on community radio, which is different from other media forms that only allow one-way contact (Ntab, 2019:3). Hence in this study, one of the questions that arise is that, how do youth respond and benefit from *Musina FM* programmes. Community radio is popular because it is easily accessible by the marginalised groups.

Community radio stations, like *Musina FM*, may help local development efforts by broadcasting information that is current and useful to the community and young people in particular. Its programmes should teach, explain, and entertain the community while also providing a space for talking about important local and global problems (Sharma, 2018). Radio is a quick and cheap way to get information to people in rural places who might not have easy access to other media. Therefore, marginalised people in rural areas often get information that affects their jobs and income through community radio. Consequently, *Musina FM* and other community radio stations found in rural South Africa are very important for reaching a wide range of people with little financial, technical, or infrastructure problems. Such radio stations entail community organisation, collaborative thought, and decision-making, all of which have significant promise for empowering communities and constructing a democratic society (Centre for International Media Assistance (CIMA), 2017:7). This indicates that collaboration with local organisation becomes an important aspect for community radio to realise its mission. However, Bulani (2021) indicated that community radio lacks support from other local organisation such as local government and NGOs. Hence this study asked a question as to what are the barriers that are affecting community radios to effectively aid communities into youth empowerment?

Throughout the history, community radio has helped give voice to people who do not normally have one, and taught people in rural areas about their rights, laws, and social tasks (AMARC, 2018). Hence the argument that *Musina FM* for examples must have programmes that teach

young people about their rights, job opportunities and other resource available to their disposal which in return gives them power to be in control of their lives. In this way, the station will empower young people by allowing them to have a voice which they are likely to not have in other media, raising awareness of their struggles and forcing government to act. This according to Kivikuru (2016) is a natural part of what community radio does in general: it belongs to people who are informed and involved in its affairs. In this instance, community radio is significant platform which allows rural people especially the young rural population to be active on issues affecting their health because it affords them an opportunity to deliberate on economic, social and problems.

Community radio stations are seen as the medium which render a dialogical space for people to engage and getting involved in the conversation that shapes their lives. A study conducted by Sharma (2018) find out that, community radio is a space where young people speak what they think and make informed and smart choices regarding their own lives. Hence community radios help to foster development by giving power to young people residing in rural areas by expanding their understanding, allowing them to participate and discuss issues that are relevant for their development. Transparency in communication and power sharing are the precondition for effective community radio movements (Wabwire, 2013). Such effective movements allow individuals, organisations, and communities to tell their own stories, share what they have been through and become active media creators and contributors as pointed out by (Al-Hassan *et al.*, 2020). There are few outlets for rural women to voice their social, and cultural opinions outside of those provided by community radio in South Africa's democratic society.

The utilisation of local languages forms a bigger part of the growth of community radio stations. When a community radio broadcasts in the indigenous languages for that particular area, it gives them a sense of ownership and pride which is a fundamental aspect of community development. They connect with stories that are significant to their cultural roots. According to Wabwire (2013), the significance of conversation, being open and sharing power through community radio indicate an important part of community development. *Musina FM* is one of the best examples that allow young people in their area to tell its own stories and engage in content creation, turning them from passive participants into active participants in the development process that concern their lives. This demonstrates that in South Africa, community radio has become a crucial form of public sphere for rural youth who are marginalised and excluded from mainstream discussions on social, economic and cultural issues (Al-Hassan *et al.*, 2020).

In conclusion, *Musina FM* illustrates the role that community radio can play in fostering vibrant communities featuring youth-centric content intended to engage and empower audiences by promoting locally relevant programmes aimed at driving active citizenship. Airing in local

languages oriented towards locally relevant issues, it helps the listeners take charge and act on matters that affect them directly which is a true sense of community ownership. This section examines the role of community radio in increasing social capital amongst young people in rural areas using *Musina FM* to illustrate how social change can be brought about through engaging local communities. As a result, the next section discusses community radio and participatory communication to indicate how community stations such as *Musina FM* may be utilised to provides young people an opportunity to partake in the conversation that affect their own lives.

2.3.1 Community radio and participatory communication in the digital age

Ideally, participatory communication through community radio entails that people should come together to engage in meaningful conversation that seek to improve their livelihoods. However, community radio has undergone significant transformation in the digital age, adapting to the changing media landscape while striving to engage youth audiences. Recent literature such as Banda (2021) highlight how the migration of broadcasting to online platforms is reshaping participatory communication within community radio, especially among younger demographics. With the proliferation of smartphones and internet access, traditional linear broadcasting is increasingly viewed as outdated, compelling community radio stations to innovate to remain relevant.

The emergency of digital media platforms allows community radio to effectively reach more young people. Studies such as Banda (2021) indicated that in the digital era, young people are migrating to use mobile applications and social media for media consumption than listen to the radio. This challenges community radio stations such as *Musina FM* to transit to more digitalised radio through the use of social media, live streaming and podcasts to create interactive spaces where young listeners participate in content creation and discussion, fostering a sense of ownership and community rather than focusing mainly on traditional model of radio to foster participatory communication (Peters & Ceres, 2022).

The digital age presents a unique opportunity to empower young people through voicing out their opinions and perspectives using previous mentioned online platforms. When young users send messages, comment on broadcasts and interact with presenters in real time, it turns them from just passive listeners into active listeners as indicated in (Juma 2023). The convergence of digital media such as WhatsApp, Facebook live, podcasting and TikTok into community radio broadcasts may help in bridging the gap between the usually traditional community radio and the preferences of young people in digital age (Nkosi, 2023). This convergence improves the listening experience while giving viewers more of a stake in their station and helps them feel considered in

conversations that seeks to improve their lives. The above arguments revealed that community radio stations like *Musina FM* might also produce more interactive programming that helps to young people in rural areas through radio convergence.

Community radio stations such as *Musina FM* will have to adopt digital changes. *Musina FM* may enjoy a strong regional following with an emerging internet audience typically in the younger age group. Podcasts, social media and live streaming could fill the gap between typical broadcast services and young people (Nkosi, 2023). *Musina FM* could increase its status as a participatory communication avenue consequently producing relevant and engaging content for rural Musina youth by working better with local leaders, artists that are appealing to the younger age groups.

Researchers like Moyo (2021) opined that digital migration impacts content diversity and representation of the community they serve, citing that through digitalisation, community radios expand into digital spaces allows them to include more youth-relevant issues such as mental health, education and social justice. Through creation of youth related content *Musina FM* may address issues and problems that young people are facing in rural areas.

Although radio convergence presents opportunities for community radio to reach larger youth populations, studies such Chuma (2022) argues that community radio struggles to navigate then digital landscape, stating that issues such as digital dived, digital illiteracy and lack of access to modern technology hinder the possibilities of community radio to provide participatory space since some youth may not have access to necessary technologies which allows them to fully engage with online content. Chuma (2022) further argued that the digital divide could increase the already existing inequality, citing that community radios adopt convergence strategies for affordable access across all demographics. Initiatives such as community workshops on digital media skills and data free live streaming websites can empower young people to utilise these platforms effectively, enhancing their participation in community discussions. Thus, in order to effectively facilitate participatory communication, stations such as *Musina FM* might have to organise community workshops on digital media skills to help young people use these platforms and participate in community conversations.

The commercialisation of digital media threatens community radio's ethos. As stations depend more on internet advertising and sponsorships, they may put profit above community needs (Osei-Tutu, 2023). Community radio relies on local programming and community interaction; therefore, this change might damage both. This study acknowledges this set back as mentioned in the problem statement cited in Sithole (2020) and Bosch (2014) who found that depending on advertising may compromise community radio programming. Thus, to navigate these challenges

while ensuring the provision of interactive spaces for youth, *Musina FM* must reconcile financial viability with its commitment to serve the public good, especially in ensuring that its youth-oriented programmes reflect local values and needs. Hence this study seeks to guide *Musina FM* as to how they can use their programmes to facilitate youth empowerment in Musina.

Community radio is a great way to reach and help young people in rural Musina. Myers (2018) says that radio helps people grow and develop, especially in poor areas where there is no other media available. Therefore, as the only available radio in Musina Municipality, *Musina FM* may give young people in rural areas important information that connects them to social and economic opportunities. Teer-Tomaselli and De Villiers (2018, 147) opined that radio is one of the best ways for people to participate in communication. Therefore, *Musina FM* can use the digital radio to ensure that they involve young people in meaningful conversation.

The arguments presented in this section highlights the importance of community radio to adopt radio convergence to reach a greater audience of young people in rural areas. Thus, it is evident that participatory programmes alone may not enough without the support of digital spaces for effective youth interaction in rural areas. This indicates that community radios may need not only need to adjust their programmes geared towards youth empowerment to offer more comprehensive participatory space but also adapt to the ever-evolving media landscape in South Africa. Therefore, the next section explores types of community radio programmes geared towards youth empowerment in South Africa.

2.3.2 Types of programmes geared towards youth empowerment in South Africa

The main aim of this study was to investigate ways in which community radio programmes support social and economic empowerment of young people in rural regions, addressing the main question of how community radio broadcasts can be utilised to empowerment in rural areas, a concern that arose from the issue identified in this study where previous studies by Sithole (2020) and Bosch (2014) highlighted that many community radio programmes tend to imitate commercial radios, for advertising purposes. For these reasons it is important that this section deals with community radio programming aimed at youth empowerment in South Africa.

In South Africa, community radio programming should reflect at least 60% of local content as required by the regulatory body (ICASA, 2020). Most of community radio focus on educational programmes, affording and emphasising academic support, career guidance, and life skills to the community they serve. As argued in Moletsane and Reddy (2013) radio education projects in rural regions have improved students' understanding of complex ideas, especially during teacher

shortages or strikes. Educational programmes often focus on the complex subjects such as Maths and science in which experts simplify hard concepts. This implies that in areas such as Musina rural, community radio stations like *Musina FM* could use comparable instructional programming, since the region has few educational resources. By giving academic parts, the station might help young people to study outside of resource-constrained classrooms.

A study conducted by Barnett and Maticka-Tyndale (2010) found that another area which community radio programmes focus on is health, especially sexual health, women's health and African medicine which plays a significant role in educating young people. This view was supported by Mohanapelo (2017), who assert that these programmes dispel stereotypes regarding HIV/AIDS, teenage pregnancy, and drug addiction. Through Interviews with health specialists and peer testimonies, youngsters may be able to understand health concerns. In this instance, *Musina FM* might also educate rural Musina youth about health concerns including healthcare access and public health dangers. Health-related information might directly engage Musina youth and help them make health choices.

As pointed in Bulani (2021) community radio stations promote entrepreneurship programmes that encourage young listeners and young entrepreneurs (Swanepoel & Strode, 2012). These segments allow local entrepreneurs to share their successes, challenges, and viewpoints. *Musina FM's* featuring local success stories from businesses might inspire young entrepreneurship. This would motivate local youngsters and provide economic empowerment chances in their neighbourhood. In addition, practical skill development programmes offer occupational skills including tailoring, carpentry, and computer literacy.

Several programmes focus on, spirituality, arts and culture to empower young people as instruments for youth empowerment, highlighting South Africa's rich cultural heritage. Mathews (2016) alludes to the point that through fostering indigenous music, dance, and storytelling, community radio give young people dignity and identity. Such programmes also provide young artists a forum to demonstrate their abilities, supporting cultural continuity and creativity.

Community radio's ability to generate conversation and interactive space makes it a formidable pillar of youth empowerment especially in rural areas. Youth oriented talk shows and discussions allow youth to voice their concerns, debate socio-economic issues, and communicate with local authorities (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte, 2013). These platforms provide young people with a better awareness of government processes and encourage them to participate actively in community development.

A critical engagement with the above analysis reveals that South Africa has a wide array of radio programmes directed at empowering young person's residing in rural communities, ranging from academic assistance, health education to socioeconomic access simultaneously also advocating for cultural and political inclusion. The symbiotic link between youth and community radio programmes emphasises the necessity of participatory media in moulding South African future leaders. To further optimise these encounters, constant feedback mechanisms between radio programmers and youngsters are required to ensure that the material stays current and meaningful. Hence it remains of paramount for this study to review literature related to the relationship between community radio programmes as a tool for youth empowerment. However, it is Important to understand the concept of empowerment, Youth empowerment and its significance before exploring its relationship with community radio.

2.4 The concept of youth empowerment

Empowerment is a multidimensional concept that encapsulates the process through which individuals and communities gain control over their lives, resources, and decision-making. Central to this study, empowerment is understood not merely as an outcome but as an ongoing process of enabling youth in rural areas to recognise their potential, access opportunities, and actively participate in shaping their social realities. The theoretical framework underpinning this research draws on empowerment theory, which emphasises the interplay between individual agency, collective action, and structural transformation. In the context of community radio, empowerment theory provides a lens to examine how platforms like *Musina FM* can serve as catalysts for fostering youth empowerment. But what do we mean by youth empowerment?

2.4.1 Definition and significance of youth empowerment

In the past few years, youth empowerment has become more important in both scholarly research and policymaking. This is because it has a huge impact on the, economic, and social futures of countries. Youth empowerment involves helping young people gain knowledge, self-confidence and power necessary to make decisions on their own behalf (Zimmerman, 2000). In a definition provided by the United Nations (UN, 2003), youth empowerment is bound to a process of enabling young people to gain authority and freedom of choice towards their own lives.

Youth empowerment is important in various ways. It primarily recognises and capitalises on the potential of youth as agents of social change (Pretty *et al.*, 2006). It is noteworthy that young people could become powerful agents of their own lives. A study conducted by Chawla and Cushing (2007) found that when young people are provided with real opportunities to make

decisions about their lives and communities the result is creativity, providing new insights to be used for community development. Hence this study explored how the *Musina FM* programmes engage and empower the youth through its content, style, and delivery. As young people are invariably at the forefront of bringing positive social and economic changes, implementing programmes that give them more power can lead to huge transformations in society.

Also, giving young people more power is a key part of solving many problems in society, such as crime, unemployment, and social unrest. Machel's (1996) found that young people who feel energised are less likely to do bad things like crime and violence because they see more chances and meaning in doing good things. These findings indicate that youth development lowers the chances of bad things happening and makes society safer and more useful by giving young people the skills and tools they need to make their lives better.

Empowering young people is especially important in South Africa, where unemployment and social inequality are still big problems. On this note, a community radio station such as *Musina FM* is very important for empowering young people because it gives them access to knowledge, learning opportunities, and ways to get involved. Youth constantly facing different challenges which *Musina FM* may use its programmes to highlight and provide youth with access to information to deal with the challenges that they are facing. This makes youth feel the sense of control and independence as they are in the driving seat of their own future. On this account, one of the key questions in this study is how young people respond and benefit from *Musina FM* programmes geared for youth empowerment.

Through *Musina FM* young people may be able to engage professionals in a range of topics, in addition to engaging in social, and economic discussions. The station may allow them to share their concerns and participate in discussions which lead to change in their communities. This validates the definition of youth empowerment as defined at the beginning of this section, indicating the imperativeness of involving young people in decision-making processes. In the end, youth empowerment is all about empowering young people with the tools and confidence to improve their own lives where they are living.

Overall, youth empowerment is the idea of giving young people the knowledge, courage, and power to make changes in their own lives and in the places where they live. In the setting of this study, *Musina FM* shows may demonstrate how community radio programmes are used to give young people more power by featuring educational, professional, and interactive shows that deal with the unique problems that South African rural youth face. The parts that follow will go into

more detail about the different aspects of youth empowerment including, social empowerment, and economic empowerment.

2.4.2 Dimensions of youth empowerment

Youth empowerment is a multidimensional concept that underscores the active participation of young people in shaping their own lives and contributing to their communities. Transformation can happen at individual, community and societal levels. Two dimensions are worth mentioning in this study, namely the social and economic. Checkoway (2011) found that youth social empowerment improves interpersonal skills, group collaboration, and community engagement. Youth with increased social empowerment may lead community service, foster healthy relationships, and mentor peers. *Musina FM* may empower young people by providing venues for talks, community initiatives, and sharing experiences. *Musina FM's* social programmes may help local youngsters learn social skills and then mentor one another, increasing community cohesiveness. Camino (2000) also claims that when teenagers gain social prominence, they question societal norms that sustain injustice and unfairness and advocate for change. Open debates and youth-led advocacy activities on *Musina FM* may help youngsters confront social inequalities in their neighbourhood, thereby fulfilling the aspects of social empowerment through community radio.

Youth economic empowerment frequently includes access to school, employment possibilities, skill development, and entrepreneurial chances as pointed in (Chigunta, 2002). Economic power helps young people break poverty cycles, minimise government aid, and encourage economic innovation that benefits whole communities (Bennell, 2007). Through job development, entrepreneurship, and skill-building programmes, *Musina FM* can empower local youth economically. In most cases, community radio often partners with local companies to train and employ youth to help them prosper economically. Thus, *Musina FM* may help young people to better their economic status, boosting the community's social, political, and economic empowerment.

2.4.3 Community radio as a tool for youth empowerment

Community radio has the potential to empower people by giving them a space to discuss socio-economic issues while also helping them build skills and media knowledge through youth-led programmes. Therefore, this section reviews the literature related to the relationship between community radio and youth empowerment in rural areas.

2.4.3.1 The relationship between community radio and youth empowerment

Due to its bottom-up approach, community radio has the unique ability to speed up social change, especially for marginalised groups (Tacchi, 2009). In this essence, A lot of research has been done on the link between community radio and social change particularly regarding youth empowerment.

To begin with, Gumucio-Dagron (2001) indicated that, community radio stations are essential for providing a voice to the voiceless, particularly in areas where local issues may not receive enough attention from mainstream media or may be eclipsed by more important national or worldwide events. This demonstrates that community radio has the power to transform community dynamics by giving voice to these marginalised stories and promoting a feeling of identification and belonging. Another study conducted in the same year by Fraser and Estrada (2001), pointed out that, the mere process of identifying and elevating marginalised voices promotes empowerment, since it upends preexisting power structures and presents an alternate viewpoint to popular narratives.

Moreover, as noted by Berrigan (1977), community radio promotes participatory communication, which is essential for real social change because of its interactive format. This is because traditional mainstream media frequently uses a top-down strategy with little audience input, if any at all. However, community radio, on the other hand, fosters communication between broadcasters and the community, as it is inherently participatory. Hence the study conducted by communication for social change pioneers Melkote and Steeves (2001) found that community radio co-creates solutions that are specifically suited to the requirements of the specific community, this two-way contact promotes collaborative problem-solving from the grassroots level, encouraging bottom-up communication for social transformation.

Community radio can be a useful instrument for youth empowerment; however, there are some detractors. While community radio can increase awareness about local concerns, some opponents, such as Fairbairn (1994), contend that it may not have the means or power to effect meaningful change on a broader scale. Additionally, rather than being truly inclusive, community radio stations run the risk of turning into venues for the promotion of certain agendas (Mody, 1991).

Notwithstanding these objections, community radio has unquestionably played a significant role in several global social movements. As to Hadland and Thorne (2004), community radio in South Africa was essential in the anti-apartheid campaign as it facilitated the dissemination of

information to marginalised populations and promoted unity. Considering this historical precedent, one should not undervalue the ability of community radio to facilitate social transformation, particularly in situations such as the Musina rural areas in South Africa.

To achieve the social and economic empowerment of young people in rural areas, it is crucial to make sure that community radio stations uphold their fundamental values of inclusion, representation, and involvement if they are to realise the full potential of this medium in bringing about social change. By following these guidelines and understanding the complex connection between community radio and social change, stakeholders may effectively utilise this medium for real empowerment, especially for young people. The above studies have demonstrated that community radio may be a tool for youth empowerment. However, some of the studies differ from the latter. It is therefore important for this study to establish and discuss the mechanism through which community radio programmes foster youth empowerment.

2.4.4 Mechanisms through which community radio fosters youth empowerment

Community radio is an important medium through which numerous programmes aimed at empowering youth are launched. These programmes take a diverse approach, each designed to address youth within their specific cultural and socio-economic settings. *Musina FM*, as a local community radio station, has the potential to apply these mechanisms to empower the youth in Musina by offering youth tailored programmes that meet the educational, social, and economic needs of the rural youth population.

2.4.4.1 Education

Community radio is vital for education, particularly in places with little formal schooling (Girard, 1992). *Musina FM* might augment formal education with educational broadcasts in remote areas like Musina where schools may lack resources or skilled teachers. These activities might meet local educational requirements with basic literacy to advanced courses. *Musina FM* might work with instructors and local schools to broadcast classes on math, science, and language skills to children who would not otherwise have access to them.

Buckles and Geerlings (2002) showed that integrating radio with group discussions or phone-in portions may create dynamic educational experiences that boost retention and engagement. Live Q&A sessions with professors or subject matter experts, enabling students to phone in or text queries, might improve education on *Musina FM*. Teachers and students might engage in group conversations about educational difficulties at the station, building community around learning.

A study by Servaes (1999) found that radio's educational effectiveness depends on content, presenters, and their ability to connect to the target audience. Accordingly, to enhance its educational effect, *Musina FM* must emphasise high-quality content development, involve qualified educators, and make programming relevant to the local environment. By doing so, *Musina FM* can provide young people in rural Musina with alternative learning options that may help them succeed academically and personally.

2.4.4.2 Advocacy

In the study conducted by Fraser and Restrepo-Estrada (2001), it was discovered that community radios can promote social concerns, particularly those that have a direct impact on young people, which is one of the most notable functions of community radio in subaltern communities. These platforms have the potential to increase public awareness of issues that are common among young people, such as substance addiction, unemployment, and mental health difficulties. They can also showcase success stories and provide a forum for young people to express their goals, worries, and accomplishments. Additionally, Manyozo (2009) states that Community radio programmes can encourage communities to unite behind certain causes. According to Jallof (2012), for radio advocacy to be effective, there must be true community involvement, tokenism must be avoided, and young voices must be truly included rather than merely featured in Community radio.

This method can be applied by *Musina FM* through campaign shows about things like education, health, and jobs that affect young people. Young people can take to the station to talk about their worries, have conversations about social problems, and push for answers that affect their lives and communities.

For instance, *Musina FM's* campaign pieces often have young people from the area talk about problems like drug abuse, which is a big problem in rural South Africa. These parts not only make people more aware of the problems, but they also connect young people to sources of help and available resources, like local rehab centers or government programmes that aim to solve these problems. By facilitating these discussions, *Musina FM* enables young people to take an active role in advocating for change within their community. This participatory approach aligns with Jallof's (2012) view that true community involvement is key to successful advocacy through community radio.

2.4.4.3 Skill development

Community radio may play an important role in skill development in addition to advocacy and education. According to Lewis (2008), becoming part of the development of radio material allows young people to hone several talents. These include technical abilities such as sound editing and equipment management, as well as soft skills such as teamwork, communication, and problem-solving. Community radio's interactive aspect guarantees that learning is experiential, creating a greater grasp of both the medium and the subject (Bucknell, 2015). Tufte (2008) takes a somewhat different stance, arguing that while community radio may be a strong vehicle for skill development, this potential goes unmet unless there is an intentional and planned effort to increase capacity inside the station's framework.

The intersections of education, advocacy, and skill development through community radio programmes become more relevant in the setting of Musina Local Municipality. By exploiting these processes, the study has the opportunity to shape a more knowledgeable, articulate, and empowered young, capable of guiding both their personal and community destinies towards a brighter future. This indicates that community radio programmes have the potential to bring about youth empowerment, however, such programmes should be tailored to improve the lives of young people. Hence this study sought to find out how *Musina FM* programmes are used to achieve social and economic empowerment in Musina. Through a correct application of *Musina FM's programmes*, young people may work on radio broadcasts as sound editors, scriptwriters, and radio hosts. *Musina FM* may give its young volunteers and participants skills they may use in school, work, and personal growth. Young people become more self-sufficient and empowered to lead their communities with these abilities.

This programme teaches audio editing, collaboration, and public speaking. By incorporating students in content production, the station builds a more aware and competent generation that can speak for their needs and assist the neighbourhood grow socioeconomically. This supports Tufte (2008)'s claim that community radio must intentionally provide organised skill development opportunities to empower young people in rural areas. Thereby aligning with the thesis of this dissertation which indicates that, for *Musina FM* to facilitate social and economic empowerment, its programmes should be aligned with the needs of young people living in Musina rural areas. It is therefore important for the following section to review the relationship between community radio content, format, and youth engagement in rural areas.

2.5 Community radio content, format, and youth engagement in rural areas

Amongst other things, community radio is known for its ability to provide a platform for the intersection between knowledge, entertainment, and community involvement. The content's synergy with its format and the resulting youth participation substantially affects its relevance in addressing local problems, particularly for the young. Hence this study seeks to answer one of the key questions as to: One of the key questions that this study seeks to answer is: 3. How do youth in Musina rural areas respond benefit from *Musina FM* programmes in terms of knowledge, attitudes and behaviours?

Community radio's primary goal is to provide information that caters to the unique circumstances and interests of its audience. This relates to concerns like unemployment, education, health, culture, and leisure for the youth of Musina Local Municipality. Fraser and Estrada (2001) emphasise that material must connect with the audience's real-world experiences. Radio may serve as a platform for action, introspection, and empowerment by tackling problems that are relevant to the community. As a result, when the information is pertinent to issues facing young people, it not only educates but also spurs action.

The presentation and distribution of material have a big impact on how people react to it. The dynamic nature of the youth demographic is highlighted by Moyo (2012), who suggests that engaging in creation of programmes increase chances for young people to respond to such programmes. Moyo further state that the youth often benefit from the programmes that they co-created. Thus, youth tend to be drawn to genres including discussions, music segments, plays, and interactive conversation programmes. Stations may guarantee a broader engagement by contrasting these with traditional broadcasting forms, appealing to both passive and active listenership.

Tacchi (2009) provides more validation of the significance of aesthetic concerns in radio programming. Youth engagement and response is influenced by several factors such as the rhythm of a programme, the appeal of music, and the clarity of discourse. Furthermore, young listeners are given a stronger sense of relatability and belonging when local languages and dialects are used.

Youth engagement and response is the result of the symbiotic relationship between format and content relevancy. Meaningful engagement goes beyond passive listening; it also involves the audience's capacity to participate, offer input, and even influence the radio programmes. Kamlongera (2011) asserts that a participatory paradigm that involves listeners particularly young

people becoming co-producers of materials ideal for community radio. Radio stations may enable youth-led real-time engagements by utilising technology such as social media platforms, like, TikTok, WhatsApp, Facebook and SMS. This allows young people to ask questions, express their ideas, and even deliver reports from the ground.

It is clear from analysing how content, format, and youth involvement interact with one another, demonstrating that the three are interrelated. This trio determines how successful community radio is, particularly in empowering the younger generation. Together, the format and substance influence the attraction of the material and encourage young engagement, with the content providing substantial value. The interactive feedback methods that guarantee that the content and forms of community radio programmes in Musina Local Municipality change in unison with the dynamic needs and preferences of young listeners are necessary for the programmes to consistently resonate with the youth.

Musina FM could use this to its advantage by letting young viewers connect with the station in real time through social media, WhatsApp, and SMS. This could let young people and young adults ask questions, give their thoughts, and even add news or stories from their own towns, involving them in the making of the station's material.

The way that material, structure, and youth participation work together show that all three are important for the success of community radio. The attraction of the material is affected by both its content and its style. However, engagement adds a lot of value by making idle viewers into active participants. Iterative feedback systems are very important for *Musina FM* to constantly connect with young people. *Musina FM* can make sure that its programmes stay current, up-to-date, and helpful for young people in the Musina Local Municipality by changing the shows' content and style all the time to meet the changing wants and needs of young viewers.

2.6. Impact of radio programmes on youth empowerment

In South Africa, Media and development communication studies have focused on community radio's empowerment of rural youth. Evaluations by Hadland and Thorne (2004), Bosch (2014), Shah (2017), and Pavarala (2003) in South Africa and other settings reveal the concrete and tangible impacts of community radio broadcasts on youth empowerment.

Community radio in South Africa has revived after apartheid, helping to reduce socioeconomic disparity. Hadland and Thorne (2004) examined how community radio affects young people in many South African rural areas; their findings suggest that among young people who tune in

community radio, most of them are influenced by youth-targeted radio programmes which increase their community involvement. These activities provided young people with a sense of connectedness, civic duty and social and economic awareness. The findings of the study clearly show that community radio may play an empowering and connecting role in the lives of young people, as seen in *Musina FM* programmes which address local issues affecting young people in the area. In the case of *Musina FM*, they may establish a platform for young civic debate on socio-economic issues through which listeners not only engage with their community but also become politically knowledgeable.

In her criticism of community radio stations Bosch (2014) takes a strong and sometimes highly idealistic proponent for participatory communication, citing that despite many of the topics relating to youth issues such as employment, education and health, Bosch believes that community radios only empower its younger listeners when they contribute towards programming development. Highlighting a significant point which suggest that young people should not only be involved conversation that seek to improve their lives but also be involved in the development of community radio programmes which aligns with participatory communication theory. This study seeks to address this claim through answering one of its key objectives which how the *Musina FM* programmes engage and empower the youth through its content, style, and delivery via focus group discussions with young people in Musina rural areas.

Similarly, Pavarala (2003) discovered in his evaluative research of community radios in India that stations that supported youth-led content typically saw an increase in community projects pushed by young listeners. This exemplified the cascading effect of empowerment, as young listeners went from passive recipients to active community mobilisers.

A recurring topic in the evaluation studies is that empowerment is multidimensional. While knowledge delivery is important, true empowerment occurs when young listeners actively shape, influence, and participate in radio programming. Through their hyper-local emphasis and underlying participatory ethos, community radios provide an unrivalled platform for teenagers to explore, negotiate, and network within their sociocultural environment.

Evaluations of community radio worldwide note its liberating potential. Fairbairn and Shah (2017) found that community radio stations in Bangladesh incorporate young people's viewpoints on gender, education, and climate change increased youth involvement. Young listeners gained agency and purpose from these programmes. Pavarala (2003) found that youth-led material in Indian community radio stations increased youth-led community projects, showing how youth empowerment may transcend beyond radio into larger social actions. These findings apply to

Musina FM, where youth empowerment activities stimulate local youth to start community projects and push for education and health reform.

Evaluation of these studies shows that community radio empowers young people in several ways. Informing young listeners is crucial, but empowerment comes from shaping, influencing, and actively participating in radio programming. Community radios like *Musina FM* should allow rural young population to investigate, negotiate, and participate with their sociocultural context, empowering them via information sharing and content production. In line with the above arguments, the following section outlines the instances in which community radio programmes has been successful utilised to bring about community development in South Africa and the globe. This is to demonstrate that, community radio programmes, if used correctly, can play a significant role in empowering marginalised people particularly young generation.

2.6.1 Case studies on the success of community radio programmes

Many triumphs are woven into the rich fabric of community radio, especially in the area of youth development. Several case studies from South Africa and other countries provide insight into the effective tactics used by community radio stations, and their quantifiable influence on young people.

BRAC's Youth Radio in Bangladesh: In the South Asian setting, this community radio initiative managed by the well-known development organisation BRAC stands out. Hossain and Islam (2013) examine the "Life Skills Education" programme, which is aimed at teenagers and provides instruction in livelihood, reproductive health, and understanding of one's rights. The emphasis on peer learning in the literacy training that is being run, allows young listeners to contribute to programming, making this venture a shining example of youth empowerment in community radio.

Radio Ada, Ghana: Beyond Asia, Radio Ada in Ghana is a demonstration of how much potential there is within community radio to empower people across a broader scope. Tacchi (2009) contends that the youth programmes of Radio Ada interweave local music and direct football interviews with general audience discussions into their interactive content development process. The station's emphasis on teaching young listeners useful life skills, such as dispute resolution and business, is especially noteworthy since it highlights the multifaceted nature of the stations attempt to empower young people in the area.

Bush Radio, South Africa: Bush Radio has been instrumental in the youth and community empowerment throughout our broader South African society as one of the first Independent

Community radio stations. Teer-Tomaselli and De Villiers (2004) elucidated the importance of the "Children's Radio Education Workshop" (CREW) programme at the station. This creative project brought to fruition a group of young radio producers who have been introduced to the basics of radio production, gained the confidence to express their worries, goals, and ideas on a platform that is specifically intended for them. CREW is a prime example of youth-led programming that speaks to the hopes of young South Africans by presenting programmes on topics ranging from health to education.

Maputaland Community Radio Station: Situated in KwaZulu-Natal, this station offers a masterclass in curating content rooted in local culture. Gumede (2010) claims that their youth-focused programme, "Youth Zone," mixes indigenous music, local culture, and current events to provide a complex picture of the present South African youth identity. The radio station embodies the function of community radio in promoting young cultural pride and critical consciousness by honouring indigenous culture and promoting discussions on contemporary issues.

The highlighted case studies converge on a shared theme: the centrality of youth participation. Youth-oriented material is important, but when young listeners become active content creators instead of just passive users, true empowerment occurs. This change is essential for comprehensive empowerment since it not only gives young voices more clout but also fosters a sense of agency and ownership. Thus, in order to really empower young people, community radio stations need to put an emphasis on participatory paradigms and involve young listeners in all aspects of programming, from conceptualisation to distribution. This demonstrates the importance of the participatory model in community radio broadcasting. Hence participatory communication theory serves as the primary theory underpinning this study. While this seems to be a best practice for community radio, most rural communities are not familiar with this model which may cause difficulties in fully comprehending the model. Subsequently, it is therefore important for the next section to outline the challenges and benefits of the participatory model of community radio broadcasting model.

2.7 Challenges and benefits of the participatory model in radio broadcasting.

This research incorporated communication theory as a main theory because community radio as a form of participatory media, inherently engages multiple stakeholders, including beneficiaries in their own development process. Additionally, this study posed two questions; What obstacles hinder effective youth empowerment via Musina FM? How do youths engage with and benefit from *Musina FM* programmes? Before moving on to the chapter three of the study, theoretical

framework, it is important essential to into explore the challenges and benefits of participatory community radio from a theoretical standpoint.

2.7.1 Challenges

Risk of Dominance by Elite Groups: While the participatory approach aims to democratise communication, it is vulnerable to being co-opted by more powerful or outspoken factions within the community. According to Fraser and Estrada (2001), power relations within communities can result in the marginalisation of really marginalised voices, therefore repeating existing hierarchies.

Resource Limitations: Participatory radio, by definition, necessitates ongoing participation and discourse with the community. However, the practicalities of such continuous connection, particularly in resource-constrained contexts, might be difficult (Jallov, 2012). Participatory principles can be hampered by a lack of finance, training, and proper technological infrastructure.

Sustainability Concerns: The long-term viability of participatory radio ventures is unknown. As Huesca (2002) points out, reliance on external finance and the difficulties in sustaining constant community engagement might jeopardise such radio stations' long-term existence.

Quality of Content: While democratising the content creation process, there is a potential trade-off with the quality of broadcasts. Maintaining professionalism while remaining true to the community can be a difficult balance to strike (Manyozo, 2009).

While the participatory approach has many challenges, particularly in terms of developing community ownership and empowerment, it is not without benefits. When using the participatory approach in radio broadcasting, practitioners must be aware of these issues to ensure that the medium stays a real representation of the community's voice.

2.7.2 Benefits

Community Ownership and Relevance: creating a sense of ownership among community members is one of the main benefits of a participatory approach in radio broadcasting. Broadcast content becomes more relevant to communities' needs, goals, and experiences when they are included in the decision-making and content development processes (Bessette, 2004). Participatory radio, as stated by Tacchi et al. (2003), ensures that the programming is appropriate for the local context, increases listener resonance, and encourages the generation of locally relevant knowledge.

Empowerment and Voice: Participatory radio broadcasting serves as a platform for marginalised voices, granting them the opportunity to articulate their concerns and opinions. According to White (1994), the participatory method gives marginalised groups-particularly those in rural areas-a platform to voice their opinions and subvert prevailing narratives.

Building Social Cohesion: Through collaborative content creation and broadcasting, communities can foster mutual understanding and reduce conflicts. Participating in dialogue-based radio programmes with various societal groups fosters social integration and fortifies ties to the community (Gumucio-Dagron, 2001).

In conclusion, while the participatory model offers numerous advantages in terms of fostering community ownership, empowerment, and social cohesion, it also presents significant challenges, including resource limitations, risks of elite dominance, sustainability concerns, and potential trade-offs in content quality. *Musina FM*, as a community radio station committed to youth empowerment, must navigate these challenges carefully to ensure that its participatory model remains inclusive, sustainable, and relevant to the needs of the Musina youth. By addressing these challenges, the station can continue to serve as a vital platform for empowering rural youth and promoting community development.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter examined prior studies on the function of community radio in enabling participatory communication for youth empowerment in Limpopo's Musina District. The relevant literature relative to community radio and its effectiveness in fostering participatory communication for youth empowerment was categorized into conceptual topics and then assessed in depth in accordance with the study goals. Literature on Community radio and participatory communication was also discussed. Collectively, the literature on the relationship between radio and youth empowerment, while studied from different theoretical and paradigmatic frameworks, demonstrate that empowerment is a fluid concept interpreted variously as either a process or an outcome. Viewed from whichever perspective, this ambivalence coalesces into the concept of participation which privileges insolvent of the concerned communities at the centre of all process aimed at transforming their lives hence the argument advanced in this study that for *Musina FM* to achieve youth empowerment in rural Musina, its programmes ought to be aligned with the needs of the community, particularly the young people. For a proper understanding of this process, Mark Zimmerman's (2000) empowerment theory may be a useful framework to make sense of the concept of youth empowerment and how it can be achieved. A detailed discussion of how this theoretical framework underpins this study is subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF EMPOWERMENT: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed literature related to community radio, youth empowerment and participation, detailing the historical development, importance, and highlights important successful case studies through community radio. The chapter also deliberate on the concept of youth empowerment, its dimension and relationship with community radio and participation. Therefore, this This outline and debate on the theoretical framework underpinning the study. The chapter discuss and debate on empowerment theory, establishing its context in development communication and community radio.

One of the central concepts in this study is youth empowerment, which the study seeks to explore in the context of community radio programming with a specific focus on the youth in a rural South African setting. But what exactly is empowerment, and how can it be achieved? There is no agreed formular or understanding on these questions. Scholars and communication practitioners in various field have divergent views on empowerment. Those conceptualising it from a sociological context refer empowerment differently as a process of mastery over issues of concern (Rappaport, 1987; 1995). Those viewing from a psychological perspective associated it with self-efficacy or individual capacity to believe in self and achieve goals (Bandura, 2002; Zimmerman 2012) or overcome adversity (Seligman, 2018). Different as these perspectives can be, they converge on two dominant spectrums of empowerment either as a process or an outcome (Mechanic, 1991; Cornel Empowerment Group, 1999) as a zero-sum game or a positive sum game (Knack, 2004).

Development communication researchers also converge on the centrality of participation, a term sometimes used interchangeably with empowerment as it also can be a process or an outcome (Rappaport, 1995; Cornel Empowerment Group, 1999). This chapter does not intend to pursue and solve this puzzle on the meaning of empowerment. Rather it discusses the concept of empowerment as “a theoretical model for understanding the process and consequences of effort to exert control and influence over decisions that affect one’s life” (Zimmerman, 2012). It also favours the popular conception in development communication that surmises empowerment as participation.

Empowerment theory is employed in this study to explain the potential that community radio has on (youth) empowerment. To address the main thesis of the study - that for *Musina FM* to achieve youth empowerment in rural Musina, its programmes ought to be aligned with the needs of the community, particularly the young people - the concept of empowerment is thus explained here as intertwined with the concept of participation. The application of empowerment theory, as Zimmerman (2012) would argue, is the most powerful theory for understanding the way in which community radio can achieve youth empowerment and social change in rural areas such as Musina.

3.2 The empowerment theory

As already intimated, this study employed Empowerment Theory as posited by Zimmerman (2000). His conceptualisation of empowerment adopts both the sociological and psychological schools of thought, which recognise the bi-directional influence between an individual and their larger social and political environment (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). According to this theory, empowerment is both a value orientation for working in the community and a theoretical model for understanding the process and consequences of effort to exert control and influence over decision that affect one's life (Zimmerman, 2012). The value orientation refers to participation as a strategy for implementing change while as a theory, empowerment articulates not only the organising logic for our knowledge about empowerment but also ways to measure empowerment in different contexts. It may be important to expand on these two orientations to give context to an understanding of empowerment as participation.

3.2.1 The value orientation

As a value proposition, empowerment theory suggests that social development challenges owe to the unequal distribution of and access to resources. Here, different people have different interests. Some get satisfaction by serving others, while others require their needs to be fulfilled by others. Accordingly, the empowerment approach goes beyond addressing negative situation. Rather it seeks to enhance wellness rather than fixing problems, identify strength instead of listing risk factors as well as searching for environmental influences instead of blaming victims (Zimmerman, 2012).

The other key aspect in the value orientation is the empowerment-oriented language which is critical for influence attitudinal change and consciousness as well redefine development agents' roles. According to Rappaport (1985) the language of the dominant discourse of development unwittingly engenders dependency on development agents by creating a view that communities

are clients who need to be helped, and maintains the idea that help is unidirectional with communities always being beneficiaries. Yet communities are endowed with social and cultural resources which the dominant discourse erases. Against this background, empowerment theory privileges values espoused in the language such as participants instead of clients or beneficiaries, and facilitators or collaborators instead of experts (Zimmerman, 2012). Here, the professional works with participants (the community) instead of advocating for them. The relevance of these values in the potential role of community radio - ordinarily underpinned by mass media theories – in facilitating youth empowerment is becoming apparent. Is *Musina FM* working with or advocating for young people? The empowerment theory suggests that the development agent's role is being a collaborator rather than expert and councillors. The agents learn about the participants cultures, worldviews and life struggles. What does this value suggest regarding community radio programming? It goes without saying that in the tradition of community radio, *Musina FM* should be working with the youths instead of advocating for them. The radio must not impose its expertise on the community but must be a resource in the hands of the community to develop capacity for community members by creating environments that support their empowerment. This means that communities must have an active role in the process.

Collectively, the value orientation to empowerment emphasises the need for communities to participate in all the processes aimed at their social transformation. Accordingly, Zimmerman (2000) separates empowerment from other individual constructs like self-esteem, self-efficacy or locus of control and adopts a social work perspective (Rappaport, 1987) where empowerment is used to refer to a process by which individuals and communities take charge of the processes aimed at transforming their lives. From a Freirean perspective, the growth in consciousness contributes to people's ability to participate in the social change processes. The value orientation perspective leads to the organising logic of empowerment discussed below.

3.2.2 The theory orientation

As a theoretical construct empowerment addresses the question on how individuals or communities get empowered. Here, two divergent but complimentary views emerge, namely: empowerment as a participation process, and empowerment as an outcome or participation (or the ability to participate). Together, these two constructs emphasise the concept of participation in that the actions, activities or structures may be empowering, and that the outcome of such process results in a level of being empowered. However, the theory emphasises that empowerment is context specific as it takes different forms for different people in different contexts. For this reason, the theory distinguishes empowerment process and outcomes. It defines empowering processes as those which seek access to and control of resources.

According to this theory, an empowering process is one that helps communities to develop skills required for them to function independently as problem-solvers and decision-makers. Thus, empowering processes also vary across different levels of analysis, for example, for individual's empowerment may include participation in organisational or community activities while at organisational level empowerment may mean shared leadership and decision-making. At community level empowering processes may include accessible community resources such as government and media among others. But what could this mean for *Musina FM* considering its mandate to empower communities it services? This is an empirical question underpinning this study.

As an outcome, the theory suggests that empowered outcomes also differ across levels of analysis. However, empowerment here refers to the enactment of 'empowerment' to understand the consequences of individuals' attempts to gain greater control in their community, or the effects of interventions designed to empower participants (Zimmerman, 2012:46). At an individual level, "outcomes might include situation specific perceived control, skills, and proactive behaviours" while at an organisational level "outcomes might include organisational networks, effective resource acquisition, and policy leverage" (Zimmerman 2012:46). At the community-level, outcomes may mean evidence of diversity, the existence of organisational coalitions, and accessible community resources.

It is important to highlight here that the youths included in this study participated not as organised structures but as individual members of community. While this may necessitate analysis at an individual level, it may be interesting to understand how *Musina FM*-as a community radio facilitates empowerment at all the three levels. Moreover, the theory suggests that while each level is described individually, they are inherently interconnected. This means that the empowerment of individuals, organisations, and communities is mutually dependent. The theory indicates that the degree of empowerment at one level is directly linked to the empowering potential of other levels. Likewise, empowering actions at one level led to empowered results at other levels. Essentially, empowered individuals are fundamental to creating responsible and participatory organisations and communities. It is in this context that this study also views empowerment as participation.

3.3 Empowerment as participation

Empowerment as participation draws from Rappaport and Cornell Empowerment Group's definition of empowerment as involving respectful, caring and reflective participation in a group to gain equal access to and control of resources (Cattaneo & Chapman, 2010). This

conceptualisation highlights what development communication scholars describe as principles of participation namely: dialogue, cultural diversity/multiplicity, collaboration, mutual learning and capacity building, transparency and accountability, bottom-up approach, and sustainability. Each of these principles is outlined in turn below after which the relevance and applicability of the theory in the study is discussed.

3.3.1 Key principles of participation

Participation encompasses and uses many essential ideas, such as conversation, empowerment, and horizontal communication. Furthermore, it promotes the involvement of communities in active engagement and decision-making not merely attendance. Thus, all community members may engage in developmental communication projects, promoting democracy and inclusiveness as pointed out by (Wilkins, 2005; Servaes, 1996). Participation further encourages discussion for two-way information and opinion exchange in line with Paulo Freire's feeling that genuine communication occurs when all parties speak equally, facilitating mutual learning and comprehension (Freire, 1970). Thus, participation stresses horizontal communication, equal knowledge and thought exchange create respect and understanding that empower communities to manage their lives and ecosystems (Lennie & Tacchi, 2013). Therefore, it is important that community radio in line with the concept of participation as the process of empowerment follow principles of participation as indicated below.

3.3.1.1 Bottom-up approach

At the core of empowerment through participation lies the importance of community driven initiatives where people, especially the marginalised play an active role in shaping social and economic situations that influence their lives (Cattaneo & Chapmans, 2010). This inclusive approach contrasts the traditional top-down model in which professionals and institutions often advocate for people's needs instead of working with the participants (the community). As pointed out in Gumucio-Dagron and Tufte (2006) a bottom-up approach underscores the locality, self-representation and active participation, allowing people to take control of their challenges and shape their future. McKee (2016) opined that this approach promotes a democratic process where people collectively take decision as equals. This in the context of the study, which sought to explore how community radio programmes are used to bring empowerment in rural areas, create a space where young people do not become only passive consumers of radio content but co-creators of radio programmes and its content which contributes to their empowerment (Servaes, 2008; McKee, 2016). The question that arises here is: How do *Musina FM* engage young people in developing its programmes?

Gumucio Dagron and Tuftes (2006) indicate that through a bottom-up approach, community radio has significant effects on empowering young people living in rural areas. Involving individuals actively in programmes development and content creation helps them feel more empowered and solidifies their role as active community members. Additionally, exchange of knowledge plays a role in communication by enabling youths to express their opinions and collaborate on problem solving initiatives together with the professionals. This promotes a shared understanding and enhances skill development collectively, allowing young people to be empowered to learn skills and gain confidence while influencing decision that affect their lives in both personal and community level (Servaes, 2008). How does *Musina FM* ensure that community engagement extends beyond creating content? Servaes (2008) posits that following a bottom-up strategy that promotes active involvement in decision making process is essential for the sustainability of the empowerment. This approach empowers individuals and nurtures a feeling of responsibility, for the station's operations. This naturally emphasises the significance of dialogue which plays a role in the process of empowerment and discussed below:

3.3.1.2. Dialogue

Another important concept in participation is Dialogue, which puts its emphasis on horizontal communication, allowing stakeholders to democratically engage in two-way communication to promote community trust and mutual understanding within the development process. At its best, dialogue can only happen when people feel safe speaking their minds, which is especially important when discussing sensitive issues related to community development. In his definition, Molale (2021) pointed out that dialogue is characterised by mutual tolerance and respect between community members, including the marginalised, whose views are accommodated and who jointly contribute to ideas in order to reach a consensus. A paper by Wang and Fuchs (2021) underscores that engagement is more meaningful when participants are allowed to narrate their experience, with opportunities for learning from fellow learners via dialogue-based communication strategies. This elucidates that meaningful dialogue can be used as a tool to transform society, as pointed out by Molale and Fourie (2023), who opined that on a practical level, dialogue requires all players to perform dialogical action characterised by accommodating each other's perspectives as in Paulo Freire's dialogical praxis, transforming the society through the word.

Therefore, community radio, as a participatory and empowerment tool, can create safe spaces for conversation that challenge health stigma and misinformation, creating opportunities for critical dialogues and better health and educational outcomes. Through programmes that engage young listeners in rural areas, *Musina FM* can run weekly live call-in programmes, where young people can call and openly express their concerns, perspectives, and aspirations to local leaders and

health professionals. This open dialogue fosters trust and a safe environment where difficult subjects may be discussed, which ultimately leads to meaningful youth empowerment. Evidently, Community radio especially in rural areas relies on collaboration, bringing together community leaders, NPOs, Government and youth agencies with young people to collectively achieve empowerment. This approach integrates different perspectives into development programmes aimed at driving change and empowerment as emphasised (Gumucio Dagron & Tufte, 2006; Servaes, 2008). This indicate that collaboration as discussed below is essential for community radio such as *Musina FM* to achieve youth empowerment.

3.3.1.3 Collaboration

Empowerment as participation put its emphasis on collaboration, through interactive process that seeks community involvement. Collaboration is one of the basic tenets within participation as empowerment that highlights how beneficiaries of changes should work together with professionals in all stages of participation (planning, design implementation, and evaluation) of development process that concern their lives. Msibi and Penzhom (2010) highlights that, involving people in initiatives does not only make them active participants rather than passive but also makes them feel important as they are active actors contributing to resolving challenges affecting their communities. Molale (2017) adds to this notion, positing that collaboration entails the involvement of people as the equal actors irrespective of their social status or power. Through this, Molale (2019) further indicates that people who are afforded a space to participate and collaborate with professionals are able to outline challenges affecting them and contribute to ideas which leads to collaborative decision making regarding to such issues. This principle is especially pertinent in health communication, where the experiences of those on the ground can offer critical insights into local health concerns. For example, research by Juma (2023) shows that through collaborations in health promotion, communities can identify their own health problems and collaboratively create solutions. This can lead not only to better outcomes in health but also to the potential for empowerment amongst the community.

In the context of the study, which sought to explore the role of community radio programmes for youth empowerment in rural areas, collaboration is equally important. This notion is crucial to *Musina FM's* programmes, not only for youth engagement and participation but also for inclusion in the creation and development of programmes. *Musina FM* can increase engagement by incorporating youth in health and educational programme development. The station may provide useful and community-responsive programming by enabling young people to discuss local health and education concerns, including drug misuse and sexual health. Participation in health promotion helps communities identify obstacles and find solutions, increasing health outcomes

and encouraging agency, according to Juma (2023). *Musina FM* may encourage participation by routinely asking young listeners for their opinions, suggesting subjects for debate, and engaging them in content development. The station can further involve young people in the development of programmes that generally speak to economic and social dimensions of youth empowerment through meaningful dialogue. However, collaborations require professionals to treat and respect local people and their culture. Thus, it is important to consider cultural diversity of the local community as discussed below:

3.3.1.4 Cultural diversity/multiplicity

Cultural identity is also a key concept within the empowerment process, as it determines and shapes discussions and perceptions of local people. Participation as empowerment process recognises that communication must be culturally relevant and sensitive to the diverse backgrounds of community members. This is especially relevant in multicultural societies where diverse perspectives can enhance conversations and provide a versatile understanding of social issues, especially in areas like health. Hence, Nkosi (2023) opined that research into community radio programming emphasizes the centrality of cultural identity, arguing that a station running content that mirrors and magnifies local culture enhances levels of interest and participation. This includes broadcasting in various local languages, recognising that the community radio serves a multicultural community. Through broadcasting in a local language, *Musina FM may integrate* local culture in its programming through broadcasting in local languages such as Tshivenda, Sepedi, English and Afrikaans, showcasing traditional music, storytelling and traditions.

Nkosi (2023) supports the broadcasting of culturally relevant content to permit localism in community radio programmes. This enables the station to come up with more entertaining content by integrating programming that appeals to youthful cultural values and experiences. For example, *Musina FM* may offer segments each week remembering local customs and instructing young people to investigate their social legacy while considering how it is accompanying the issues of today (e.g., instruction, occupations, wellbeing). Such a move enhances cultural identity and helps the station better tailor its programming to account for listeners of diverse origins which foster a sense of belonging and recognition by others, which according to Attuh and Kankam (2024) ; Olorunnisola *et al.* (2022) equals to empowerment. This view may create mutual learning which is another tenant o participation as discussed in the next section.

3.3.1.5 Mutual learning and capacity and building,

Mutual learning and capacity building is one of the key tenets of participation in the empowerment processes. Gumucio, Dagron and Tufte (2006); Lopes (2020) assert that mutual learning involves sharing knowledge and experiences among all participants including youth, community members and professionals. Here each participants perspective, ideas and views are valued to foster a collaborative learning atmosphere in the development process. Thus, professionals are treated as equals players to the beneficiaries who learn from local community. Hence Melkote and Steeves (2015) assert that this approach promote learning and fostering collaboration among individuals to solve issues and collectively make decisions utilising platforms such as community radio where young people voice their opinions and interact with leaders' to actively engage in empowerment process. This collaborative approach towards mutual learning aid young people to collectively work together with *Musina FM* stakeholders in order to identify their challenges, come up with the solution to address such challenges. Mutual learning is important in development process since it allows people to converse as equals and in the process be open and transparent with one another. Additionally, transparency build trust between the community and the professionals involved in the development process. This also allows the development, managers to account to the beneficiaries of empowerment, creating a sustainability development initiative.

3.3.1.6 Sustainability

While participation and dialogue are important in development project, their outcomes facilitate the empowerment of the beneficiaries. However, such empowerment is not considered to be successful if it cannot be sustainable. Therefore, sustainability is a fundamental concept in participation since it demonstrates the outcome of the process and solidify the empowerment of communities to take control over their lives without external assistance. As pointed out in Molale (2014) and Molale and Fourie (2023), empowerment is not just about giving people information but allowing local communities to make decisions collectively as equals and thereby acquiring skills, knowledge, information and confidence to advocate for their own needs. Moreover, Molale (2021) elucidates that true empowerment only happens when people are afforded a safe space for active participation in which the skills are acquired, used for self-sustainment or development. He further indicated that community development projects that do not follow the latter and the former should be deemed illegitimate since these do not achieve the main aim, empowerment. This indicate that empowerment as an outcome should be sustainable, but its sustainability lies in active and meaningful participation of the participants or beneficiaries of change. Recent research has indicated that being active in communication through participation is an agent of

empowerment, which enables people to acquire new capabilities and leadership positions within society (Banda, 2021). The involvement of local youth in the development of community radio programmes not only builds capacity but also empowers them to take leadership roles in the communities. This allows young people to be co-creators of materials used to empower their communities. In other words, being involved in co-creating radio material equip young people with skills that they can use either to uplift their communities or for self-sustainment beyond *Musina FM*.

Participation empowers by developing skills and leadership as per (Banda, 2021). In this context, *Musina FM* might teach youth to report on community events, health campaigns, and education efforts via a "*Youth Reporter Programme*." These programmes may assist the station in developing future leaders who can promote peer voices and community choices. Because empowerment needs the local people to be skilled and knowledgeable, agents of change such as *Musina FM* should recognise the already existing skills in the community through *Asset Based Community Development*. Thus, in terms of empowerment, the success of any development project is on true participation and transfer of skills beyond development project to ensure the self-sustainment aspect of empowerment.

3.4 Application of empowerment theory in the study

The application of the theory in research plays an integral part since it demonstrates the theoretical relevance of the chosen theory to guide the study. As a chosen theory for this study, empowerment theory helps to explain how young people in Musina rural areas may benefit from *Musina FM* programmes through meaningful and true participation. Although there is unanimity among scholars that empowerment is a fluid term with no agreed definition, this study position itself on Zimmerman (2000) who explains the concept of empowerment theory by highlighting that empowerment is an outcome of participation in the development process. Thus, empowerment can be a process of participation or an outcome of participation. According to Zimmermans (2000) prospective individuals and communities experience empowerment through acquiring skills, information and knowledge that shape their own lives and influence social and economic situations (Rappaport, 1995; Cornel Empowerment Group, 1999). In the context of this study, empowerment means that young people are seize with control of producing and creating radio content that reflects their challenges and aspirations, use these programmes to socially and economically empower themselves. In this context Tufte and Mefalopulos (2009) suggest that empowerment happens when people or communities influence decisions and outcomes in the development process through active participation.

Perkins and Zimmerman (1995; 144) define empowerment as the journey from feeling powerless to gaining some control over one's life and surroundings. Feeling powerless can result in low self-esteem and disconnection from the environment leading to an inability to act independently and relying heavily on outside to solve the internal challenges. Thus, for empowerment to take place there must be a shift towards taking charge of one's life as active participants in the process that are meant to improve one's life rather than remaining a passive receiver and spectator. Hence for *Musina FM* to effectively empower young people in rural areas, there must be a shift in creating and developing radio programmes. Young people ought to be at the centre of production so that they utilise these programmes to uplift their own lives. Hence the thesis of this study which argue that; for *Musina FM* to achieve youth empowerment in rural Musina, its programmes ought to be aligned with the needs of the community, particularly the young people. But how can the radio ensure that its programmes are aligned with the need of young people in rural Musina?

Zimmerman (1995:569) and Mohanepelo (2017) attempt to answer this question citing that empowerment only take place when the wellbeing of communities or individuals are taken into consideration in development process but not only that, they further indicate that people should participate and be equipped with knowledge and skills while involving professionals as partners rather than deciders. This in other words calls for equal engagement between *Musina FM* and young people in order to understand the needs and aspirations of young people residing in rural Musina.

Through the lens of empowerment theory, the researcher was able to examine whether the involvement of communities in the drafting and implementation of *Musina FM* programmes empowers young people, which, according to (White, 1994; Servaes, 1996), should be the end goal to transform society (empowerment). This notion has been supported by scholars such as Molale (2021) and Masibi and Penzhorn (2010), who noted that the end goal of empowerment as participation which sometimes may be referred to as participatory communication should be reaching mutual understanding and providing a solution to the identified predicament.

Through participation, local people can take control of their initiative, which started with the idea of community radio. This involves investigating how *Musina FM* empowers young listeners, includes youth voices, and enables talks about their struggles. According to Gumucio Dagron (2001) and Fraser and Restrepo-Estrada (1998), participation may be utilised to evaluate community media's empowerment of self-expression and community engagement. The empowerment theory further explains how participatory spaces, local knowledge, and collective action empower teenagers in community radio (Couldry, 2010; Tacchi, 2002). Therefore, this theory was relevant to the study, and it serves as the core theory that underpins the study.

3.4.1 Lense to examine the radio station values and mission

This study sought to explore how community radio programmes facilitate youth social and economic empowerment in rural areas. Therefore, examining the station missions is important in order to understand whether *Musina FM* mission is aligned with the needs of young people residing in Musina rural areas. The mission of *Musina FM*, as a community radio, is to provide a platform for local voices, strive to become the go to entertainment source and a reliable outlet to promote community development and empower marginalised communities socially and economically (Itaza, 2019). This mission underscores the stations commitment to showcasing success in tackling community concerns and assisting local community into social change. Thus, empowerment theory calls for evaluation of this mission in order to understand whether the station is aligned with needs of young people in Musina rural areas.

3.4.2 Lense to examine radio programme development

Using empowerment theory to evaluate how *Musina FM* involve young people in the development of its programmes calls for participation, talk, and strength. This study reviewed *Musina FM* programme material based on themes, target groups, and interests (Lennie & Tacchi, 2013). Qualitative semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions looked at how shows like these encourage participation through different voices, viewer feedback and involvement, analytical thinking, and community involvement speech (Tuftes & Mefalopulos, 2009).

3.4.3 Lense to examine the station's empowerment processes

The notion of engagement strategies emphasizes that individuals feel empowered when they are both information recipients and communication participants (White, 1994). *Musina FM's* involvement strategies can be judged by how well they create interactive participation channels that get young people involved in making material, giving comments, and having community conversations.

A strong empowering approach is shown by shows with discussions led by young people, interviews with local people about issues that affect young people, or interactive segments where listeners can share their thoughts and ask questions in real-time (Couldry, 2010). Hence, using the empowerment framework to look at these strategies means figuring out how well they help people participate in meaningful ways, how much they encourage young people to think critically, and how they affect how much youths think they can change their social environments (Gumucio Dagron, 2001).

3.4.4 Lense to examine the outcomes of the empowerment processes

Through the empowerment theory, *Musina FM's* programmes' transformational potential on young knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours may be assessed. Young people may remark on *Musina FM's* programming via surveys, interviews, and participation workshops. Local issue knowledge, community participation attitudes, and civic engagement or social activism behaviours may be investigated (Melkote & Steeves, 2001). This is very important for *Musina FM* since it will assist in tailoring their programmes according to the youth response for empowerment purposes. empowerment theory says that participation helps marginalised groups feel more self-efficacy and common efficacy. This means that *Musina FM's* activities should help young people become involved members of the community who listen, talk, and gain from the radio itself.

Empowerment theory does a good job of focusing on both individual and community may be empowered both economically and socially hence this study used empowerment as a single theory guiding this study.

3.5. Conclusion

In conclusion, empowerment theory provides a rich analytical framework for studying *Musina FM's* involvement in young empowerment, helping us comprehend the complicated relationship between media, participation, and social change. This theoretical approach recognises community radio's role in empowering rural youth and enables communities to become the drivers of their development. As a theory based on open participation as a process, the theory is unique in studying strategies that community radio may apply to improve interactive communication for youth empowerment. It highlights how crucial it is for communities to collaborate, communicate, and be empowered by the media, particularly community-based media such as community radio (Servaes & Malikhaio, 2007; White, 2003).

The above approach helps the general society to learn how community radio gives young people power by letting them talk about their lives and neighbourhoods, thereby letting them feel like they own and control their lives (Girard, 1992; Fraser & Estrada, 2001). Moreover, empowerment theory focuses on people from different backgrounds and cultures, bringing attention to the problems and opportunities that people from rural areas face when they use media (Tacchi, 2002).

CHAPTER FOUR

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapters discussed the relevant literature and theoretical lens applicable to the study, demonstrating the relevance of empowerment theory and to community radio and youth empowerment. Therefore, this chapter outlines the research methodology applied to investigate the complex relationships between community radio programmes and the empowerment of young people in Musina, South Africa. Due to the complexity and breadth of this study, this chapter describes a qualitative research methodology which was applied to carry out the study. Furthermore, interpretivism paradigm which was used to deeply explore the living experiences, views, and effects of community radio on local youth in rural areas of Musina is applied. This way of thinking about methods recognises that youth development is a subjective thing, and that community radio plays a complex role in making it happen.

To make sure that the research process is open and accurate, the reasoning behind this choice is given, along with a full explanation of focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews as the tools used to collect data. The chapter further explain purposive sampling used to select thirty-eight ($n=38$) participants to be part of this study. The chapter concludes by describing how ethical concerns were carefully carried out before and during data collection to protect the research's accuracy and the volunteers' rights, which shows that the study is dedicated to ethical scholarship. The flowing section discusses the interpretivism research paradigm as a basic framework that directs the philosophical foundation and methodological techniques of the study.

4.2 Interpretivism research paradigm

This research used the interpretivism paradigm since it matches its aims and objectives. The study sought to determine how community radio programmes are used to facilitate youth social and economic empowerment in rural Musina, South Africa. This required knowing the sentiments, ideas, and experiences of *Musina FM* radio programme listeners, specifically young people. This made the interpretivism paradigm correct for the study since it allowed for a full investigation of how empowering youth in Musina's social and economic milieu is varied, nuanced, and situational. More crucially, the research shows how empowerment takes into consideration individuals' perspectives and experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This is in accordance with the research central argument which centred itself on that, *Musina FM* can only empower young

people in rural areas if they are aware of their needs and aspirations. Therefore, it was important to know the role of community radio programmes in helping youth achieve this aim. Thus, from this perspective the researcher interacted with both young people in Musina rural areas and employees at *Musina FM* to understand their views, perspectives and experiences regarding community radio programmes.

In the academic landscape, the notion of a research paradigm is quite important because it serves as a basic framework that directs the philosophical foundations and methodological techniques of a study. Kuhn (1962) was the first person to use the term "paradigm" when referring to a collection of practices that constitute a scientific profession at any given point in time. A research paradigm, in its most fundamental form, is comprised of the researcher's worldview, the assumptions that it subscribes to regarding knowledge and reality, and the methodological procedures that it adopts. *Figure 4.1* below illustrates different types of research philosophies and how they connect to different methodological choices.

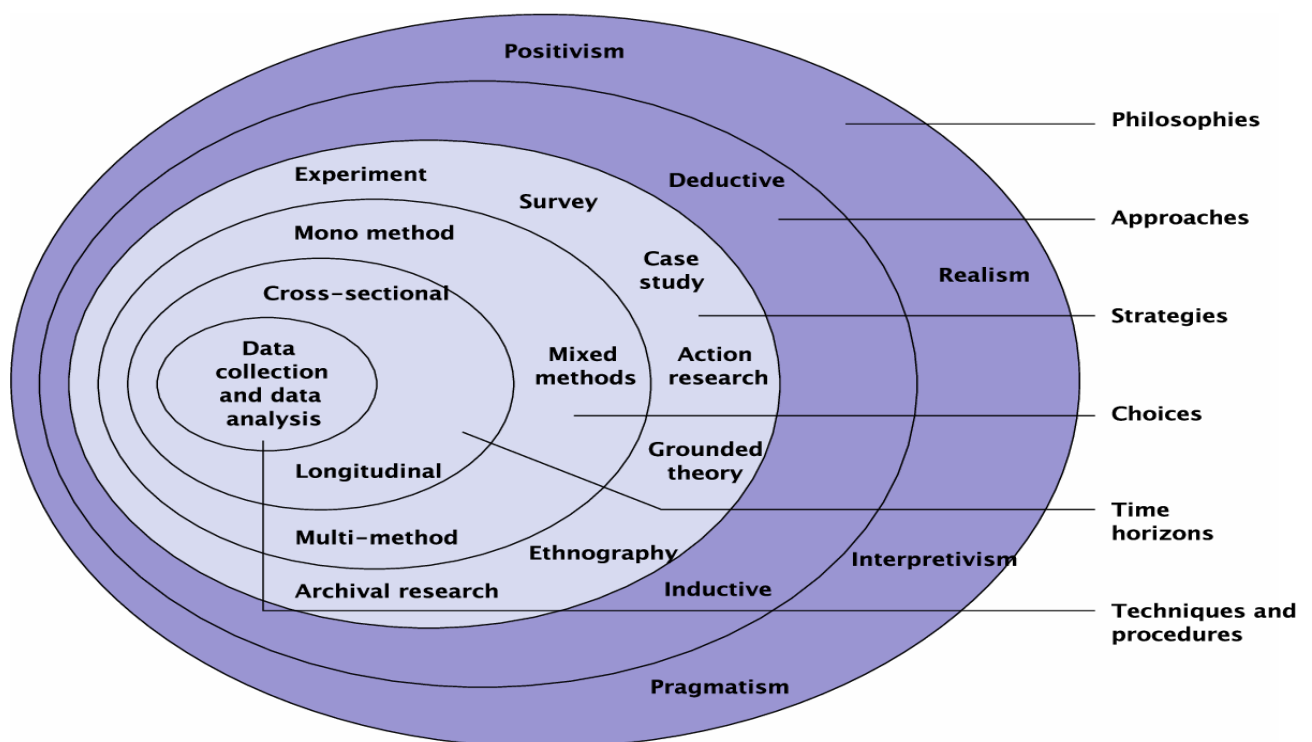


Figure 4.1 Research Onion. Source: Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019:130)

According to Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2011), the four paradigms that predominate in social scientific research are positivism, post-positivism, interpretivism (or constructivism), and critical

theory. This shows that there are different philosophies that researchers can use to guide their studies and, choosing a research philosophy depends on the field in which the researcher belongs. As shown in Figure 4.1, the research onion is a complete framework that helps researchers make smart choices about the methods, strategies, and processes they use in their studies. The image, which was taken from Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019:130) and explained in more detail by Zethi (2023), shows the layers that researchers need to peel back in order to understand the depth and breadth of the research process. Philosophies, methods, strategies, options, time frames, techniques, and processes for study are all part of these layers.

The onion's topmost layer is made up of ideologies. These philosophy-based beliefs shape our understanding of reality (ontology), knowledge (epistemology), and the values that guide our study (axiology). These ideas are very important to the general plan of the study because they affect how data is gathered, studied, and understood. Since the researcher understands these philosophical positions, the interpretivism paradigm was chosen to guide this study.

The second layer is about studying methods, specifically the logical and reasoning methods. Inductive research looks at how to make new theories from data that has already been collected, while deductive research starts with a theory or idea. This study used deductive reasoning because it allows the researcher to begin the investigation through empowerment theory and further examines its applicability in the context of community radio and youth empowerment. Deductive reasoning starts with general principles or ideas, in this case, the notion that empowerment can be achieved through access to *Musina FM*.

After that, the research methods shown in the onion, like case study, ethnography, and grounded theory, allowed the researchers to pick methods that fit with their philosophical views. A case study method was chosen as the best method for this study because it gave a thorough look at *Musina FM*'s interactive communication plan and how it empowers young people. This plan made sure that the analysis is focused and thorough, which fits with the interpretivist theory.

Lastly, the inner layer of the onion depicts the methods and techniques used to gather and analyse data. This level focuses on the useful tools of research, like surveys, interviews, and statistics or theme analysis. Qualitative methods like semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were used to get in-depth information from both *Musina FM* staff and young people residing in rural areas who participated in this study. This gave researchers a full picture of the radio station's role in empowering young people living in rural areas in the Musina region.

As indicated above, the interpretivism paradigm was chosen as the paradigm applicable to this study. Interpretivism posits that reality is not something objective and outside of people. Instead, it is made up of people's experiences and the social situations they are in (Schwandt, 2000). This idea stresses the importance of understanding the personal meanings that make people act and interact with others the way they do. The interpretivism paradigm further states that researchers should live like the people they are studying to understand what they are studying fully. While positivist thinking seeks universal laws via remote observation and quantitative analysis, Interpretivism differs greatly from positivism in this regard since it postulates that people create meaning based on their interpretations of social experience.

The interpretivism approach permitted qualitative research methodologies, which helped the study to explore how community radio programmes are used to facilitate social and economic youth empowerment in Musina rural region. Qualitative research tools like focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews helped the researcher to observe individuals and their environment. Having this one-on-one conversation with young people from Musina rural areas was very important for understanding the various ways that *Musina FM's* shows inspire young people. Here are some of the ways that the courses change young people's information, views, and actions. For Denzin and Lincoln (2011), the interpretative approach ensured that there was enough analytical freedom to investigate the different and situationally specific effects of young people's power gain through community radio.

Moreover, the interpretivism paradigm was picked because it fits with the purpose of the study, which is to understand difficult social processes from the point of view of people who are going through them. The second point is that the interpretivism paradigm supported the use of qualitative study methods, which allowed the researcher to investigate the subject in more depth and with more detail, unlike quantitative methods, which reduce people's feelings about statistical data. Lastly, it acknowledges the importance of the young people's social and economic surroundings in shaping their experiences and perspectives in Musina. This made sure that the study findings are applicable and important to the area where data was collected (Bryman, 2016). Hence, the below section outlined qualitative research methodology as a methodological framework used to explore the experiences and perspectives of young people living in rural areas of Musina regarding the impact of community radio programmes on their social and economic development.

4.3 Qualitative research approach

The "research approach" is the academic plan to attain research goals. It entails choosing data gathering, processing, and interpretation methods, techniques, and tools. Since this study adopted the interpretivism paradigm as a philosophical foundation, a qualitative research approach was used in the context of this study, which aims to investigate the role of community radio programmes on youth empowerment in rural areas. A qualitative research approach was relevant since it enables the researcher to probe and understand participants' experiences, perspectives, views, opinions, and strategies, as well as the content and impact of the radio programmes themselves (Denzin, 2009:139). Qualitative research data collection methods such as semi-structured interviews with *Musina FM* employees and focus group discussions with young people in Musina rural were employed with the aim of understanding data and human patterns. These research data-collection methods were chosen since they allow the participants to express their feelings and find meaning in their reality, unlike quantitative research approaches, which aim to find meaning through statistics (Bergv, 2001). The former notion has been cited in Zethi (2023), who opined that the qualitative researcher studies things in their natural settings to make sense of, or interpret a phenomenon and the meaning it brings to people. In addition, qualitative research methods intend to get answers through extensive examination of people and their surroundings and how these surroundings make sense to them. In addition, qualitative research is not concerned with quantifying phenomena, that is, the quantities of information gathered, an approach that is common with positivist researchers (Zethi, 2023). Berger (2016:55) provided a distinction between qualitative and quantitative approaches. This distinction is shown in Table 4.1 below:

Table 4.1 Distinction between qualitative and quantitative approach

Qualitative Research	Quantitative Research
Seeks to evaluate	Counts, measures
Uses concepts to explain	Process collected data
Focus on Theoretical	Statistical
Interpret experience, feelings and opinions.	Describes, explains and predict
This leads to an evaluation.	Leads to a hypothesis or theory
Interpretation can be attacked.	The methodology can be attacked.

Source: Berger (2016. p 55)

The above distinctions depict the major difference between qualitative and quantitative research approaches. As indicated before, this study adopted a qualitative research approach, as explained by Schwandt (2020), who provides an all-encompassing definition of qualitative research. Observing the environment through the lens of a qualitative researcher is an activity that occurs in the present moment. Schwandt (2020) points out that a person may see the world via the use of interpretative material acts. Various mediums are used to communicate the information in this process, including field notes, interviews, discussions, images, recordings, and notes to oneself. Instead of attempting to extract or isolate the phenomena themselves, qualitative researchers examine phenomena in the context of the meaning's humans attach to them.

Due to the interpretative, naturalistic approach of the study to investigate the function of community radio programmes in fostering empowerment for youth in marginalised communities, the qualitative research approach was deemed to be the most appropriate method for this study (Anderson & McSpadden, 2020:52). Qualitative research aims to grasp the ideas, emotions, and situations of human beings. To get a deeper understanding of the participants' perspectives, the researcher used a qualitative research methodology and incorporated them directly into the study process. The study employed semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions to get a deeper understanding of both *Musina FM* employees and young listeners who reside in Musina rural areas.

According to Schwandt (2020), qualitative researchers concentrate on social phenomena and the expression of participant views and viewpoints. Thus, it was pertinent to this study, which aims to explain the feelings, meanings, and views of young community members on the utilisation of community radio programmes on youth empowerment in rural areas. Therefore, qualitative researchers feel that comprehending social knowledge is a scientifically valid endeavour (Schwandt, 2020).

Creswell (2014) posits that quantitative research evaluates hypotheses by evaluating the link between factors that can be measured and evaluated using statistical techniques, whereas qualitative research investigates human conduct and its causes. Thus, qualitative research examines nature, complex issues, dynamic processes, and how individuals and communities comprehend their experiences (Merriam, 2009). Qualitative research was needed to determine how *Musina FM* radio contribute to the empowerment of young people residing in Musina rural areas. It revealed Musina youth's subjective radio programming perceptions and impacts. The qualitative research revealed how participation and engagement improve youth knowledge, attitudes, and actions which resemble empowerment as the central concept in this study.

This study was excellent for qualitative research since individuals and their situations were intimately engaged. The researcher collected rich, detailed narrative data about young people's experiences with *Musina FM's* programmes via semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions and then interpreted the findings through the lens of the participants and empowerment theory. This is because qualitative studies how humans create subjective meanings and realities in sociocultural contexts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Other features include flexible and contextually appropriate qualitative research, since local cultural, social, and economic concerns impact the community radio empowerment of the young people. Flexibility was needed to understand *Musina FM's* youth empowerment function and improve and duplicate its rural initiatives (Patton, 2015). Since the qualitative research approach sought to explore the participants' feelings, perspectives and opinions regarding the utilisation of community radio for their empowerment, it was important for this study to adopt a research design closely aligned with this research approach. Hence, the exploratory research design was adopted, as discussed in the section below.

4.4 Exploratory research design

Research design can be described as the strategies that are precise plans for research to gather, review, and discuss research findings, as detailed by (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Researchers pick strategies depending on their questions and aims of their study. Durbeim (2006) viewed a research design as a strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between the research questions and the research implementation. Saunders *et al.* (2019) further posit that this framework for action is known as a research strategy, designed either as a mono-method qualitative study or a multi-method qualitative study. This helps the researcher meet the study's goals in a planned way (Yin, 2018). The researcher employed an exploratory research design for this study since the primary goal of these efforts was to acquire as much pertinent data as practically possible concerning the research problem and to generate novel ideas for the investigation. During the investigation of this study, the researcher uncovered new information that compels him or her to shift the focus of the academic work that had been in progress (Kumar, 2019). It is used when the purpose of the inquiry is to collect extensive information to identify the problem and provide research suggestions. Exploratory research aims to investigate prospective study subjects, ascertain the nature of the problem at hand, and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the issue under investigation.

The study of *Musina FM* and how it affects the growth of young people in rural places used a case study method. Creswell and Poth (2018) say that a case study is a detailed look at a small system or a case (or several cases) over time. This is done by collecting specific data from a number of

different sources that are rich in context. In studies that look at a modern occurrence in its real-life setting, this method works especially well because it makes it easy to see the lines between the phenomenon and its setting.

The exploratory method works well for this study because it allowed the researcher to explore the programmes of *Musina FM* and investigate them in their natural settings. Because community radio shows can help young people in rural areas and have many uses, the exploratory design made it possible to look closely at *Musina FM's* shows, how they got young people involved, and the effects these programmes had on the young people. This method helped this study to find out the social, cultural and economic issues that affect the development of youth in the Musina Local Municipality as a whole.

Hence, this approach was relevant because it allowed for a variety of ways to gather information, such as semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Using two different types of data collection methods for the study made the results stronger and gave a fuller picture of how the radio shows affected young people's confidence. It gave the researcher a chance to hear from a range of people, such as youth, programme-makers, presenters, managers and producers, so that they could get a full picture of the radio's role in the community (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Moreover, the adaptability and flexibility of this approach reinforced its utilisation. The researcher changed the study's emphasis depending on fresh ideas and thoughts as they researched. Exploratory designs are versatile, making them appropriate for exploratory investigations with changing research topics (Stake, 2006). In light of these discussions, the next chapter outlined techniques and procedures followed by the researcher during the study.

4.5 Techniques and procedures

The interpretivism paradigm is, as demonstrated in the preceding sections, at the core of this research as a philosophy guiding the study. In addition, the preceding sections specified the qualitative research methodological approach that guided methods of data collection and its explorative nature in forming a framework for study. Thus, this section describes data methods and techniques followed by the researcher during the study. It begins by describing the population studied, then explains the methods used to sample this population, as well as focus group discussion and semi-structured interviews as data collection instruments and conclude by describing thematic data analysis used to analyse and interpret the findings of the study.

4.5.1 Target population and the case study approach

In research, target populations are the complete community or group of individuals being investigated and analysed (Salkind, 2014). The study's target population comprises everyone who satisfies the study's eligibility requirements (Majid, 2018). Salkind (2014:12) argues that a sample group's characteristics must mirror those of the target population in order for the findings to be reliable. The population for this study, which is about community radio and youth empowerment in rural areas, with a focus on *Musina FM* in Limpopo Province, South Africa, is made up of all individuals who are directly related to or affected by the operation community radio station programmes and its outcome. Every segment of this population has a different perspective on how *Musina FM* operate, where and how programmes are created and disseminated, who listens to these shows in what way, or if such listening can empower young people with decision-making capabilities.

While content producers and programme managers are responsible for the creation and administration of daily programming, radio managers play a crucial role in supervising and managing the stations' daily operations. On the other hand, presenters and producers are accountable for content creating and delivering of the shows and may have valuable input to provide about how *Musina FM* programmes are structured and what topics are covered. Target listeners also include youth from the Musina rural areas who can attest to the role that these broadcasts play in their lives. This population was chosen because they have first-hand experience regarding the creation and participation in *Musina FM* programmes. Hence, their participation in this study shed light in answering the main aim of the study which is to explore how community radio programmes are used to facilitate youth empowerment in Musina rural areas of South Africa.

This study used *Musina FM*, the only community radio station found in Musina Local Municipality in Limpopo, South Africa. Musina Local Municipality has 12 wards that are divided into urban, rural urban, and rural areas. Like any other rural place in South Africa, young people in the Musina region, particularly rural areas, have been experiencing various challenges, including a high rate of unemployment, lack of information, lack of skills development, and a high rate of crime. In rural Musina, these challenges are exacerbated by issues such as poverty, low-skilled youth, and employment opportunities. Therefore, since *Musina FM* is the only radio in the Musina region, it serves as a significant community development tool with the potential to aid citizens in social change, especially when it comes to youth empowerment in Musina rural areas. Hence the main thesis of this study argued that, to realise this potential *Musina FM* programmes ought to be aligned with the needs and aspirations of young people living in rural Musina.

Considering the high number of unemployed youths in Musina, which amounts to 45% of Musina's Population, it is evident that if *Musina FM*, as a community development tool, plays its role fully, it can bring about a notable change. Therefore, this study investigated the utilisation of *Musina FM* programmes to socially and economically empowering the youth in the region. Through semi-structured interviews with the station employees, the study sought to find out whether *Musina FM* have programmes aimed at youth empowerment and determine how these programmes bring youth empowerment. Moreover, focus group discussions with young people residing in Musina rural areas were conducted with the aim of probing how youth engage, participate, respond to and benefit from *Musina FM* programmes aimed to empower them. Both *Musina FM* employees and young people residing in rural areas were engaged in the quest to identify barriers that are affecting effective youth empowerment through *Musina FM* programmes and also identify strategies that the radio can employ to bring about effective empowerment in Musina rural areas.

This study on community radio and youth empowerment in Musina rural areas purposefully selected the participants due to their knowledge of *Musina FM* programmes. Thus, data collection did not include every youth residing in this rural area since, according to Zethi (2023), several reasons make it impossible for the researcher to collect data from the entire population. As pointed out by Creswell & Creswell (2018), Saunders *et al.* (2019), and Perri and Bellamy (2012), and cited by Zethi (2023), lack of funds and sometimes, time and larger population compels the qualitative researcher to have limited and manageable population since it emphasizes the context and phenomena, unlike quantitative research which seek to focus on larger representative samples. The above population was chosen with the intention that its findings would nevertheless be representative of young people in Musina rural areas.

4.5.2 Sampling technique and sample size

Sampling is the process of selecting "a representative sample that is reflective of the whole population," as defined by Maree (2012). Purposeful sampling was used in this study, which means selecting a subset of the population depending on the specific needs of the participants.

Purposive sampling selects data-rich samples of the phenomena of interest. Patton (2002) and Creswell and Poth (2018) contend that purposive sampling selects individuals according to talent, experience, or involvement in the study topic. This approach is suitable for exploratory research aiming to understand the richness and complexity of participants. This study's purposeful sample research studied rural youth empowerment through community radio. Therefore, the choice of research problem methodology for this study prevented random sampling from providing context-specific participant data.

The researcher was able to select *Musina FM* staff and engage young listeners with empowerment concepts. This was necessary for the research which examined the broader contribution of community radio on youths' knowledge, attitudes and behaviours. Choosing people who respect and have knowledge of community radio is empowering and potentially enhances resource allocation. This efficiency was important given the study's exploratory character and rural research's logistical challenges.

A purposeful selection of young empowerment experts in engagement tactics, content relevance, and participation aided their study. This targeted approach helps researchers understand how community radio empowers rural youngsters and affects society. Finding the optimum qualitative research group size is both an art and a science. It involves making information simple to access and utilise while addressing deep and wide learning demands. The exploratory research on *Musina FM*'s influence on the development of young people in rural areas needed a well-planned sample size to capture the wide variety of experiences, perspectives, and advantages of community radio programming, particularly in rural areas.

This study had a total of thirty-eight ($N=38$) participants, including eight ($n=8$) *Musina FM* staff and thirty ($n=30$) young people from various racial and ethnic origins, forming a group that consisted of youths between 18 and 35. Youths who actively listen and, at times, participate in *Musina FM* programmes were identified as participants in this study. This was to ensure that different areas were represented in the study, which enabled the researcher to obtain rich and accurate data. Eight *Musina FM* employees aged 18-35 also formed part of the study since they have first-hand experience in the formation of community radio programmes.

In qualitative research, saturation is a crucial point in data collection where no further information offers additional insights or perspectives regarding the research question or topic (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The objective is to achieve a level of data collection that enables the researcher to gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being studied. When researching community radio programmes and rural youth empowerment, the researcher believed it was essential to capture the full range of experiences within the community being studied.

Saturation is commonly linked with iterative data collection methods, such as interviews, focus group discussions, or content analysis of radio programmes. When examining the influence of community radio on youth empowerment, it was important to gather enough and accurate data from various sources. Therefore, it is important to note that although the researcher had estimated to conduct seven (7) focus group discussions as the preliminary number of participants, the

researcher was guided by saturation to stop data collection after conducting five focus group discussions upon being convinced that the data collected was sufficient for the study.

Sampling in qualitative research is typically purposeful, with participants selected based on their relevance to the research question. By utilising a versatile sampling strategy, one can adapt the sample size to align with the dynamic data collection and analysis process. As indicated above, this study used the purposive sampling method because the researcher knew which people to include on account of their knowledge of the area. Thus, it is important to outline the inclusion and exclusion criteria followed by the researcher to include and exclude participants in this study.

4.5.2.1 Inclusion criteria:

- Number of Participants: The study engaged at least thirty-eight ($n=38$) participants including thirty ($n=30$) young individuals through focus group discussions and eight ($n=8$) *Musina FM* employees through semi-structured interviews.
- Age Range: Participants were aged between 18 and 35 for years for the focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews, aligning with the definition of 'youth' as recognised by the National Youth Commission Act of South Africa.
- Gender: The study included equal number of females 15 and Male 15 for focus group discussions participants and 4 males and 4 females from *Mussina FM* to maintain a balanced gender representation, aiming for an equal number with consideration for non-binary and transgender individuals to ensure inclusivity.
- Ethnicity: Reflecting the demographic diversity of the Musina Local Municipality, the study included participants from various ethnic backgrounds, with a focus on inclusivity of the predominant ethnic groups in the area.
- Socio-economic Level: Participants from a range of socio-economic backgrounds were included ranging from students, unemployed, self-employed and employed to understand the varying impacts of community radio across different socio-economic strata.
- Engagement with Community Radio: Participants included was regular listeners of *Musina FM* or have directly contributed to the content creation, production, or dissemination of the radio programmes.

It is noteworthy that the above-mentioned participants were drawn from youth who are regular or active listeners of *Musina FM* and those employed at the station. Thus, the following aspects was considered for exclusion of participants in this study.

4.5.2.2 Exclusion criteria:

- Age: Individuals below the 18 and above 35 years age range were excluded to maintain the focus on youth.
- Lack of Engagement with Community Radio: Individuals who do not listen to or have not engaged with *Musina FM* in any capacity were excluded, as the study aims to explore the use of community radio on its audience and contributors.
- Non-Residents: Non-residents of Musina Local Municipality were excluded to ensure the study reflects the local context and its unique socio-economic, cultural, and environmental factors.

Focus groups discussion and semi-structured interviews are necessary to gain a better understanding of the perceptions of the young people and *Musina FM* employees concerning the role of community radio programmes on youth empowerment. This is because these groups consist of young community leaders who represent different aspects of the community. In research, the inclusion and exclusion indicate the process that the researcher undertook to identify the participants of the study. These participants were recruited using various recruitments methods and tactics as outlined below:

4.5.3 Recruitment of the participants

Participants for this study were contacted and recruited through a multi-faceted approach to ensure a wide reach and inclusivity of the target population in Musina Local Municipality. The recruitment strategies included the use of community radio broadcasts, social media platforms, online listeners clubs, physical listeners club and flyers distributed in community centres and local institutions, Local government, and NGOs. These recruitment methods are briefly discussed in the next section.

4.5.3.1 Recruitment methods

Community Radio Broadcasts on *Musina FM*: Announcements, advertisements, and call-to-action messages were aired during programmes such as *Youth to the Future*, *Tsumbavhuyo* and *Tshidziki Tsha Mafhungo* inviting listeners to participate in the study. These announcements briefly described the study's aim and background, participants criteria, and how to express interest in participating. The details of the researcher were provided to allow the participants to voluntarily reach out to the researcher and be part of the study. The researcher further used Social Media Platforms, online and physical listener clubs: Posts on platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp

groups, Instagram, and X were updated as they are commonly used by the youth in Musina detailed the study's aim, participants requirements, and contact information. Visuals and hashtags relevant to youth empowerment and community radio was used to increase visibility. Lastly, Flyers were distributed in community centres, libraries, local colleges, and gathering spots, providing a summary of the research, participant eligibility, and contact details for expressing interest. The same flyer was posted on *Musina FM* social media to reach a wider range of youth in Musina.

Picking young people from different areas in Musina allowed the researcher to obtain necessary and accurate information about how community radio programmes affect the growth of young people in a variety of rural areas. They knew everything there was to know about the goals, problems, and successes of community radio projects because they had started and run them themselves. The idea of saturation helped the researcher figure out the right sample size in the end. In qualitative research, saturation is what happens when gathering more data does not lead to new answers to the research questions at hand (Saunders *et al.*, 2018). This kept the research on track and working effectively, preventing time and money loss from excessive data collecting.

4.5.4 Data collection instruments

Researchers meticulously gather research data using data-collecting tools. The qualitative research techniques described by Creswell and Creswell (2017) make it easier to examine participants' perspectives, experiences, and insights into the study issue. The study examined how *Musina FM* empowers the young rural population using semi-structured interviews with *Musina FM* staff and focus group discussions with young people residing in Musina rural areas, as explained and justified below.

4.5.4.1 Focus groups discussions

In qualitative research, focus group discussions refer to unstructured interviews in which the researcher discusses with the participants with the intention of obtaining perceptions, opinions, views, and feelings regarding the investigated phenomena. Thus, the researcher develops a research guide with open-ended questions in order to allow discussions among participants. Focus group discussions collect qualitative data by having a small group of individuals from comparable backgrounds talk over research study themes, according to Krueger and Casey (2015). In qualitative research, focus groups discussions with 6–12 persons can be applied to keep things manageable and allow for in-depth discussion. Considering the latter number, this study collected data through five focus group discussions, (see Annexure1), which consisted of

six youth participants per focus group. This encouraged active engagement and diversified viewpoints.

Focus group discussions were ideal for studying community radio programmes' complicated dynamics and young people's empowerment in rural areas. These sessions allowed young participants to discuss their experiences, perspectives, opinions, challenges, and *Musina FM's* empowerment efforts for young people's social and economic empowerment within Musina Local Municipality. As participants responded to and built on one other's comments, insights emerged that would not have emerged in one-on-one interviews.

Each focus group session was carefully organised and conducted in the Musina library using a semi-structured framework that allowed for flexibility in exploring issues as they arose. The researcher created a guide with open-ended questions linked with the study's research goals to keep the discussions on topic while exploring emerging ideas.

In this study, the researcher decided to use focus group discussions as a way to collect data because they can give rich, detailed information about the experiences and thoughts of the target population as a whole. This method was great for getting a rich picture of the subject because it brings out the different thoughts and opinions of the people who take part, which is harder to do with other qualitative methods like observation and note to self (Morgan, 1997).

Because this study was mostly about understanding the social and economic effects of community radio programmes on empowering youth, focus group discussions were very helpful. Participants in the groups said what they thought and went into more detail about it, which showed how social rules and processes affected how they listened to and responded to the radio shows. The active nature of focus group discussions also helped people get a better sense of how complicated it is to give young people in rural places power, including the pros and cons of using community radio as a tool for social change, especially regarding youth empowerment in rural areas.

It was carefully thought out that focus group discussion would be used as a main data collection tool in this study. Not only did including them fit with the interpretivist framework of the study, but it also greatly improved the quantity and quality of the data gathered, leading to a fuller and more nuanced knowledge of how community radio empowers rural youth.

4.5.4.2 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews are a qualitative research data collection method that entails conducting extensive interviews with study participants. It is intended to conduct in-depth, one-on-one interviews with participants, which takes the form of a dialogue in which the researcher asks penetrating questions to gather information about the issue and find new thoughts and perspectives on it. The researcher used semi-structured interviews (See Annexure 2) to collect information from the station managers, programmes managers, three content producers and three radio presenters working for *Musina FM*. The fundamental benefit of in-depth interviews is that they give significantly more specific information than other data-gathering methods, such as surveys, may provide. They may also create a more relaxed environment for information collection.

Semi-structured interviews were used to enable in-depth discussions, generating rich data that revealed participants' lived experiences and views (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). In addition, due to the open-ended nature of semi-structured interviews, this method allowed the space for engaging points and concerns as well when questions arose that the researcher was not intended to ask, thereby ensuring comprehensive data collection as cited in (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Also, this method was employed because it permitted the researcher to collect data because it was able to bring personal points of view. These collections of semi-structured interviews uncovered individual stories, thoughts and feelings about youth empowerment through community radio (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). As a result, this study opted for semi-structured interviews as a secondary data collection method to collect the stories, experiences, and personal views of participants about *Musina FM* in South Africa.

4.5.5 Data analysis

Once the researcher completes fieldwork, the process of transcribing all gathered data takes place in preparation for the data analysis phase. In qualitative research, data analysis is not just about the collection and sorting of data; instead, it includes breaking down data into themes by using codes and then presenting information for further discussions, as pointed out in (Walsh 2017:68). Qualitative data analysis, according to Creswell (2017), is oftentimes a mix of inductive and deductive reasoning. Researchers in qualitative studies place data into abstract units from which they generate patterns, classifications, and themes. This process allows finer-grained deductive data analysis (testing pre-existing theories against the data) and inductive analysis (where discoveries emerge from specific research findings).

The approach followed in this study was mainly of the (testing pre-existing theories against the data, deductive reasoning. Deductive reasoning moves from specific existing theory to the problem then generate questions and collect data to answer the questions. For example, data collected on the role of *Musina FM* programmes in youth empowerment revealed detailed insights into how the correct application of empowerment theory influenced young people in rural Musina. The study endeavours to draw these specific findings together in broader conclusions that it is hoped will have a more general applicability to other community radio stations in similar rural contexts. The deductive approach allowed the researcher to explore how participation in radio broadcasting empower disadvantaged communities, *using Musina FM* as a case study to inform the future applicability of the findings elsewhere.

The researcher analysed the data, and key themes emerged from data that were related to how *Musina FM* in empowering youth, community engagement, and social development. These themes emerged from the objectives and data, as part of deductive reasoning process, demonstrating the organic nature of qualitative analysis. This study utilised a thematic data analysis approach, which is thoroughly discussed in the section below. By offering a deeper reflection on the operation of *Musina FM* within its nuanced socio-cultural location, this data analytic technique can provide lessons for other community radio initiatives attempting to empower marginalised young people living in rural environments. The following section discusses the thematic data analysis adopted in this study.

4.5.5.1 Thematic data analysis

Using Nvivo software, this study used thematic data analysis to investigate *Musina FM*'s role in empowering rural youth. Thematic data analysis is a versatile and popular way to find and analyse data topics. It minimally organises and describes dataset in (rich) detail and analyses study topics as outlined in (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method involves several key stages which the researcher had to follow to have accurate data. Below is how the researcher followed all the steps in thematic data analysis as indicated in (Braun & Clarke, 2006), six phases of thematic data analysis (See Figure 4.2).

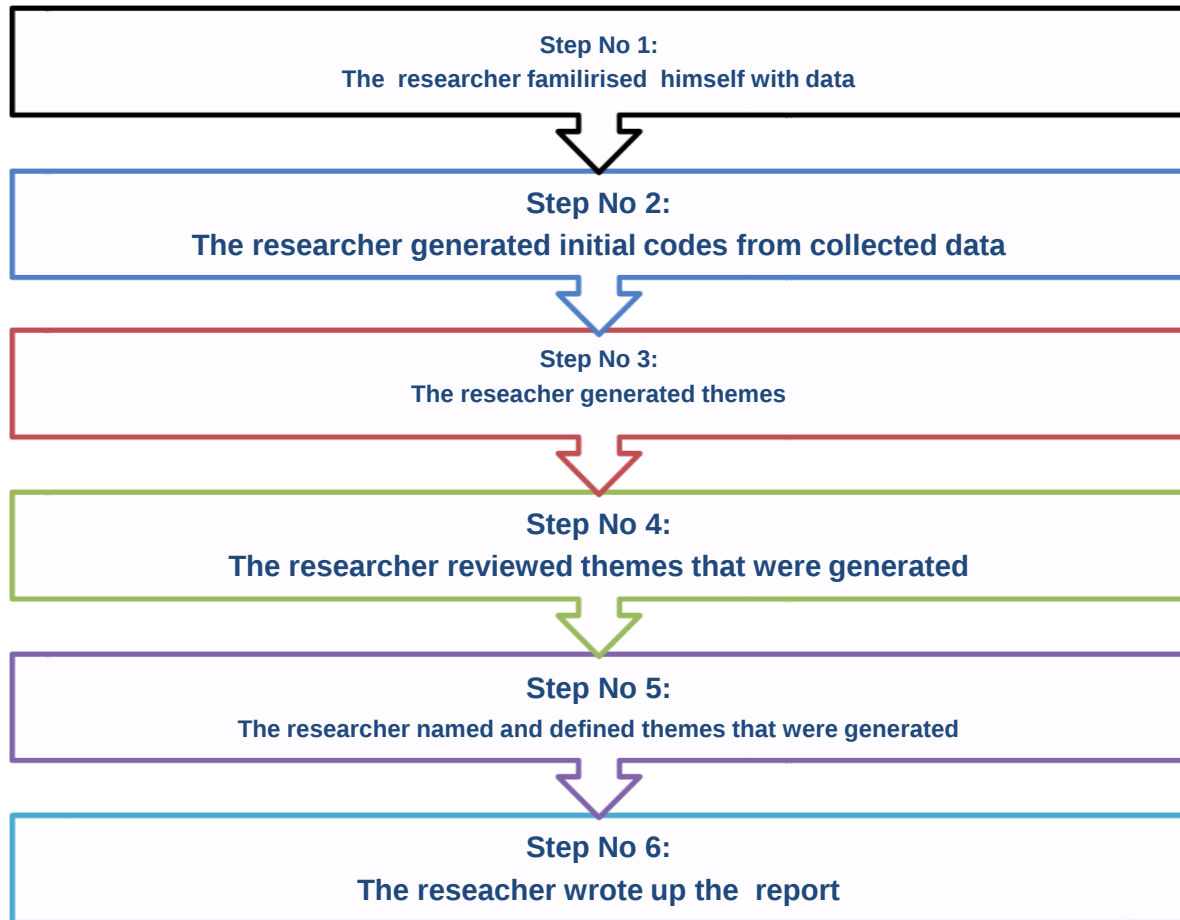


Figure 4.2 Braun and Clarke (2006) model of six phases to conduct thematic analysis

Figure 4.2 depicts the steps undertaken in this study as indicated in (Braun and Clarke 2006). These steps offer an organised structure for researchers to methodically interact with data aiding in a thorough examination of themes and patterns. Each stage leads into the next guiding the researcher through the analytical journey to extract valuable insights, from the data. In this study's context the coming section will explain how these stages were utilised to explore the utilisation of *Musina FM* shows on empowering young people living, in rural Musina, South Africa.

In the first phase of thematic data analysis, the researcher familiarises him or herself with the data through reading the interviews and focus group discussions transcripts. In this study, the researcher made sure to listen to the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions recordings, transcribe the data and read and reread their transcripts over and over again to become very familiar with what the data.

The second phase entails generating codes through systemically organising gathered data into meaningful units. According to Magure and Delahunt (2017), this stage requires the researcher to carefully identify the relevant codes based on the key patterns and concept present in data. Thus, in this study, the researcher systematically coded noteworthy aspects of the data over the dataset, and the compilation of data pertinent to each code. The third phase of thematical data analysis involves examining codes that are related. In this study, the researcher sorted codes into related topics and obtained all pertinent data.

In the fourth stage, the researcher is required to review, modify and identified themes. For this study, the researcher created a "map" of the analysis based on themes and checked to see if they were consistent with both the coded excerpts and the whole dataset.

The fifth phase requires the researcher to define and give name to final themes. In this study, the researcher made sure that there was an ongoing investigation to enhance the particulars of each theme as well as the overall narrative that the analysis conveys, as well as the generation of distinct definitions and titles for each type of topic. Through this, the researcher identified core elements and meaning in each theme and give a clear description of the themes.

The last and final phase in thematic data analysis requires the researcher to write a research report based on the themes. Therefore, each theme was discussed in detail, in chapter five of this study, data presentation and analysis, providing relevant data extracts to support the finding. Thus, in this study, the researcher chose vivid, engaging extract cases, analysing them and relating them to the study topic and literature, and drafting a scholarly report as indicated in (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Through the exploration of the six stages of thematic data analysis process used in this study, the researcher was able to identify five principal themes including *Youth empowerment programmes*, *Youth engagement and participation*, *youth response and benefits*, *Barriers to effective youth empowerment and strategies for youth empowerment through Musina FM programmes*. These themes emerged from semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion as narrated by the participants and are directly tied back, to the research questions and objectives.

Previous studies by Boyatzis (1998) Braun & Clarke (2006) and Magure & Delahunt (2017) guided the analysis process, adhering to established techniques and quality standards in qualitative research to ensure reliability and credibility. Braun and Clarke (2006) well as Magure and Delahunt (2017) have provided detailed steps in the previous section to explain how thematic

analysis was carried out in this study and highlights its significance. Henceforth the upcoming section will provide a rationale, for the importance and application of thematic data analysis.

For a number of reasons, thematic data analysis worked well for this study. First, it made it possible to look at the data in a variety of ways, which was very important for learning more about the complicated topic of youth development and the role of community radio. The freedom of thematic analysis helped the researcher to look at the different levels of meaning in the data obtained from semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, which were full of insightful information.

The thematic analysis also helped identify predicted and unexpected themes, revealing rural youths' *Musina FM* experiences. This helped the researcher understand how community radio programming can empower young people, engage them, and transform their knowledge, thoughts, and actions. In the end, it was faster and more accurate to look at the data when NVivo tools and topic analysis were used together. With NVivo's help, it was easier to list, code, and locate data. This made the study more organised and clearer. They used both theme analysis and qualitative data analysis tools, which is why the study's findings were strong and based on the data. While the data analysis procedures presented here provides a clear understanding of how data was obtained analysed and used to write a final report, it is significant to consider ethical issues that the study followed as discussed below.

4.5.6 Ethical considerations

This study, like many others, certainly raise doubts regarding the data collection procedures. As Ezzy (2012:93) points out, researchers are prohibited by ethics from causing harm to study participants. Codes of ethics are necessary to "ensure the integrity and validity of the research" (Ezzy, 2012:109). The research emphasizes the importance of sticking to ethical principles throughout this examination. When it comes to data collection and dissemination, ethical challenges are most likely to arise, which include participant safety and privacy, as well as informed permission (Delamont, 2012).

Prior to collecting data, ethical clearance was requested and obtained from the Basic and Social Sciences Research Ethical Committee (BaSSREC) of North-West University (See Annexure C). According to this process, a full research proposal had to be sent in that explained the study's goals, the methods used, and what was done to make sure that ethical problems were addressed. After ethical approval, the study followed study ethical guidelines.

Ethically, the participants must be given sufficient information regarding the study in order for them to decide their involvement. This includes not putting participants at risk and giving them all the information they need about the study (Babbie, 2012). As a basic requirement to conduct this study, the researcher applied and obtained ethical clearance from the previously mentioned committee to protect the privacy of the participants and collect data in a way that does not compromise their safety. The application included a consent form for the study participants. This was to make sure that participants were made aware that they could stop participating in the study at any moment without facing any kind of punishment.

Upon receiving the ethical clearance from the entity mentioned above, the researcher proceeded to contact the participants through telephone, WhatsApp, flyers, radio advertisements and listeners club in order to reach youth in Musina rural areas. In all these methods of establishing contact, the researcher mentioned that he had already made a pre and informal arrangement with the radio station. However, this arrangement was only came to effect after the researcher had received ethical clearance and introduced a consent form to the radio station participants. This was to ensure that the research adheres to ethical elements such as Informed consent, Privacy, Anonymity, and Beneficence. These concepts are discussed more fully below.

4.5.6.1 Informed consent

A fundamental ethical element in this investigation was informed consent. Prior to conducting the research, participants were approached with a consent form for their approval to ensure that their participation was voluntary. Participants were informed of the study's aims, amount of involvement, data usage, and rights, including the ability to withdraw at any time without penalty (Israel & Hay, 2006). To guarantee comprehension, permission forms were created in simple, easy-to-understand language, Tshivenda and English. To begin participation, all participants had to complete and sign consent form. This method ensured voluntary, informed, and documented authorisation.

4.5.6.2 Confidentiality and anonymity

Participants' personal information was kept secret and anonymous. Coding participants' data instead of using names anonymised it. Electronic data were saved on password-protected PCs for the study team only. Participants were advised that any study publications or presentations would use pseudonyms and delete identifying information to protect their identities, as is discussed by (Sieber, 2006), who asserts that it is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that participants' information remains confidential. To satisfy this claim, the researcher used the

following codes to refer to participant. For focus group discussions, participants were referred to as “P” standing for participants and from semi-structured interviews participants were referred to as “R” standing for respondent.

4.5.6.3 Avoidance of harm

One of the researcher’s responsibilities was to make sure that taking part did not hurt, bother or upset participants. This was a very important thing to think about because talking about personal situations on community radio and how they affect people could be sensitive. During semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, steps were taken to make sure that everyone felt safe and supported. People could skip questions that made them feel uncomfortable and could quit at any point. The researcher was ready to give the subjects information on community support services if the discussion made them feel bad or if they said they needed those, as pointed out (Wiles *et al.*, 2008).

4.7 Delimitations and validity of the study

Just like any other study, this study was delimited in certain aspects. These boundaries imposed the scope of the study which focused only on one community radio station, using semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Therefore, the findings of this research cannot be generalised to other contexts and situations since circumstances are different. It would be beneficial if the researcher had used at least two or three radio stations in different areas. However, because of other constraints like time and budget, the researcher could only afford to look at one community radio station.

The research was also delimited methodologically since it used qualitative approach only. While the qualitative approach helped in understanding how community radio initiatives benefit Musina youth, some would argue that the approach was flawed in several ways. Some would argue that a quantitative approach would have facilitated the reaching of many respondents, which would provide a reasonable representative of the whole population. However, quantitative research methods would have brought inaccurate results since people would have been surveyed with no experience when it comes to *Musina FM* and programmes and its operations.

The research was also affected by its data type (primary data). One would argue that the use of secondary data would have provided more insights due to the availability of reliable sources. Secondary data refers to the data already in existence (Creswell, 2013). In this study, a small sample size was chosen to investigate each person’s experience adequately. As a result, it might

be difficult to use the study in other scenarios because of this, but since the study followed qualitative research methods, primary data provided enough data for the study. It is common for qualitative study to make things hard to use in real life, even though it helps us learn more (Patton, 2015).

Participant bias is another flaw in the method used. Different ways of collecting data and connections were used to try to fix this problem. However, the fact that people shared their own experiences, perspectives, insights and opinions can make the study's findings less dependable. Because of the study's aim, the people who took part had to be from rural Musina. However, this means that the opinions of people who live in Musina or in other groups that were not in the sample might not have been fully recorded (Tripp, 2012).

4.8 Quality assurance

In research quality is considered critical with key elements, like trustworthiness, credibility and dependability playing vital roles in designing research (White, 2003). These key elements are mentioned and discussed below.

4.8.1 Trustworthiness of the study

In an academic landscape, qualitative research must be credible, transportable, dependable, and confirmable to be trustworthy. The purpose of these criteria, which are analogous to validity and reliability in quantitative research, was to establish the integrity of the study's findings and to determine whether they are applicable. Due to the difficulty of investigating community radio programmes and youth empowerment in rural regions, such as the situation with *Musina FM* in South Africa, it was essential to adhere to these components.

4.8.2 Credibility

Based on the study context and participant viewpoints, credibility is trust in the findings. This study was conducted in the field for a long time to assure trustworthiness. Extended time in the community helped participants comprehend the context and bond, resulting in more honest and thorough comments. Focus group discussions and in-depth interviews were used to triangulate the data, which increased its validity. Triangulation verified findings to ensure they correctly reflected participants' experiences and the phenomena (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

4.8.3 Transferability

Transferability is how well the study's results can be used in different situations or with different groups of people. Even though generalizability is not the main goal of qualitative research, giving a full account of the study's setting, subjects, and methods helps other people figure out how useful the findings might be in other situations. In this study, much information was given about the setting of Musina Local Municipality, the features of *Musina FM*, and the people who took part. This in-depth account lets other researchers figure out if the study's findings can be used in similar situations. This could help guide future community radio programmes in other rural areas that aim to encourage youth.

4.8.4 Dependability

The term "dependability" refers to the consistency of data throughout time and in almost the same situations. In order to address this issue, the research project utilised an audit trail, which involved the documentation of the research process in great detail. This included choices on data collection and analysis, modifications to the study design, and thoughts on adjustments to the methodology. By maintaining this level of transparency, other researchers are able to follow the decision-making process and evaluate the consistency and rationale of the study. Additionally, the researcher's participation in reflexive practices, which involve critically examining their assumptions, biases, and effects on the research process, played a role in ensuring that the findings were an authentic reflection of the data obtained rather than the researcher's preconceived notions (Shenton, 2004).

4.8.5 Confirmability

This means that the study is less focused on bias, intention, and influence of researchers related to findings but more on respondents' interaction effects or contextual factors. The researcher kept a reflexive diary to ensure confirmability. This diary provides the reflections of a researcher on data collection and analysis, personal biases and findings from these studies. Through peer-reviewed sessions, researchers and supervisors looked into the study methods and findings. This ensured that the reviews were balanced without any emotional bias from the researcher.

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter sets out a methodological framework to investigate the strategies which community radio uses as an empowering tool for Musina Local Municipality youth. Qualitative research was employed in order to uncover the richness of community radio programme's role in rural youth

empowerment. A qualitative study design informed by an interpretivist paradigm was applied to enable a prioritised understanding of this interaction from the viewpoints of those directly involved. This ensures the research is grounded in everyday experiences of Musina's youth and interpretations of how *Musina FM* operates.

This chapter also detailed various methodologies and techniques that were used to execute the study. This includes focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews, purposive sampling and thematic data analysis. All were handpicked to ensure they aligned with the aims of the study and answered its research questions. The study adhered to the highest calibre of research ethics, with an emphasis on participant consent, anonymity and safety. The ethical components were emphasised since they demonstrate this dedication. This strategy improves the robustness of research findings and can assist in increasing generalisability to real-world practice. This study seeks to ultimately elucidate key findings that can readily be translated into meaningful applications, thus providing informed directions for policy-making and future research in utilising community radio as a tool of empowerment across rural Africa as well as other regions worldwide.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1. Introduction

The youth (aged 18–34) constitute almost a third of the population (17,84 million) in South Africa (Stats SA, 2023). Among these, the majority are ‘in the heat’ as they often fall within one of three categories: uneducated, unemployed, and unemployable. These challenges are exacerbated by limited access to information, educational opportunities, and infrastructure (Mlatsheni & Leibbrandt, 2011). To mitigate these issues, community radio has emerged as a key tool for community development, particularly in marginalised areas.

This qualitative study was set out to explore community radio and youth empowerment in rural areas in Musina, South Africa, utilising *Musina FM* as a case study. The main aim was to explore how community radio programmes facilitate youth social and economic empowerment in rural areas. The study argues that, for *Musina FM* to effectively achieve youth empowerment (help young people handle the heat) in rural Musina, its programmes must be aligned with the specific needs and aspirations of the local youth population.

Data reported in this chapter was drawn from a purposeful sample of thirty-eight ($N=38$) participants through a multifaceted data collection method including focus group discussions with the young people residing in the Musina area and semi-structured interviews with *Musina FM* employees. The population in this study provided dynamic characteristics, including age, gender, occupation, location, and the number of times they listened to *Musina FM*. The identification of these characteristics is elaborated in the next section after which a detailed presentation of the findings is provided in the subsequent sections.

The findings are presented and analysed thematically through the lens of Mark Zimmerman’s (2000) Empowerment theory. The presentation is organised in a manner that responds to the study’s research questions which constitute the key thematic areas around which the findings are discussed. The key questions the study pursued are:

- a. What specific radio programmes at *Musina FM* programmes most effectively engage and empower the youth in Musina rural areas?
- b. How do *Musina FM* programmes empower youth through engagement and participation?

- c. How do youth in Musina rural areas respond and benefit from *Musina FM* programmes in terms of knowledge, attitudes and behaviours?
- d. What are barriers to effective youth empowerment in Musina rural areas through *Musina FM*?
- e. What strategies can *Musina FM* employ to improve youth empowerment in Musina rural areas?

As a caveat, the term empowerment is in some instances in this study used interchangeably with participation. This is not least because participation is a central concept of empowerment – understood either as a process to, or an outcome of empowerment. The theoretical analysis of this study emphasises the need for community radio programmes to involve young people in all stages of participation through dialogue, which is aimed at empowering young people while considering their different cultural beliefs, hence the central focus of this study: how can community radio programmes be utilised to empower young people residing in rural South Africa, especially in rural areas of Musina? The next section presents the demographic profile of the participant to effectively contextualise the findings as advised by (Ahmed *et al.*, 2016).

5.2. Demographic characteristics of the study participants

A total number of thirty-eight ($N=38$) participants were involved in this study. This comprised thirty ($n=30$) young people from rural areas in Musina who participated in focus group discussions (FGDs) and eight ($n=8$) employees of *Musina FM* engaged through semi-structured interviews (SSIs). Participants were asked to provide demographic of their details, including age, residential location, and, for the young people, their radio listening habits. *Musina FM* employees discussed their roles at the station and the length of their service at the station. Since this study focuses on the role of community radio programmes in empowering rural youth, understanding the participants' backgrounds is crucial. Capturing these demographic profiles was essential, as they provided the contextual backdrop needed to interpret participants' perceptions and experiences effectively.

Demographic data in qualitative research is critical for several reasons. Firstly, it allows researchers to situate participants within specific socio-cultural contexts, thus enriching the interpretation of their narratives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Secondly, it supports transparency and enables readers to assess the transferability of findings to similar contexts (Tracy, 2010). Finally, understanding demographic characteristics helps in exploring how factors such as age, location, and professional roles influence behaviours, attitudes, and decision-making processes. In this

study, such insights were vital for linking the theoretical framework of empowerment to the lived realities of rural youth and the operational dynamics of *Musina FM*.

5.2.1 Youth demographics

As previously stated, young people who listen to *Musina FM* and reside within Musina Local Municipality in rural areas were purposeful selected due to their knowledge and experience regarding community radio programmes and their functions, which formed focus group discussions. Therefore, this section focuses on their demographic characteristics.

The participants' age groups ranged from 18-25, 25-30, and 30-35, in line with the literature, as per United Nations which defines youth as individuals between the ages of 18 and 35 (United Nations, 2015). The data analysed revealed that most (40%, 12 in number) of the focus group discussions participants fell within the age 18-25 group, followed by ages between 25-30 (37%, 11 in number), while participants aged 30-35 were equal to (23%, 7 in number). These age groups provided a diverse age range, allowing for a broad perspective on engagement among youth. The researcher selected an equal number of males (50%, 15 in number) and females (50%, 15 in number) for the focus groups discussions. This was essential for community radio initiatives as it represents a gender-neutral way to empower young people, ensuring an equitable contribution of both males and females

Given that participants are from different places, as depicted in *Table 5.1*, below, data highlights the diversity of young people's experiences. Although an actual percentage for each location was not given, the data on geographic distribution emphasises how community radio has filled in gaps to meet local needs. In rural contexts, where social networks are smaller quantitatively, they may have more limited reach, but the geographical spread of this network is crucial qualitatively. Community radio networks build social capital through engaging youth across regions in a shared narrative.

The findings show that amongst 30 focus group discussion participants, *Musina FM's* listening patterns show rich insights for community engagement and youth empowerment in rural areas. Most of the participants listen to *Musina FM* for a minimum of five times per week (33.3%), reflecting a strong commitment to the station, followed by those who listen to the station twice a week (26.7%) and the least 20% listen thrice and another 20% once, indicating different levels of engagement with the radio station. The level of participants' engagement with the station indicates the effectiveness of *Musina FM* in reaching its audience and underscores the potential for

enhancing community engagement and youth empowerment through targeted programming.

Table 5.1 provides an overview of the youth participants involved in the focus group discussions.

Table 5.1 Demographic characteristics of focus group discussions participants

FDG	Age group	Gender	Location	Time listening to Musina FM	Occupation
FDG1					
P 1	18-25	Male	Nancifield	Five times	Unemployed
P 2	25-30	Female	Moshango	Once	Self-employed
P 3	25-30	Male	Masisi	Twice	Unemployed
P 4	30-35	Female	Madimbo	Thrice	Self-employed
P 5	30-35	Male	Matswale	Once	Employed
P6	18-25	Female	Mabvete	Thrice	Unemployed
FDG2					
P 1	18-25	Male	Malale	Thrice	Self-employed
P 2	18-25	Male	Tshenzhelelani	Five times	Student
P 3	18-25	Male	Gumbu	Once	Unemployed
P 4	25-30	Female	Maramanzhi	Five-time	Employed
P 5	18-25	Female	Manenzhe	Four times	Student
P6	30-35	Female	Tshipise	Five times	Self-employed
FDG3					
P 1	25-30	Male	Makavhini	Twice	Student
P 2	18-25	Male	Manenzhe	Once	Unemployed
P 3	30-35	Female	Tshiungani	Twice	Employed
P 4	18-25	Female	Tshivhongweni	Five times	Self-employed

P 5	18-25	Female	Zwigodini	Six times	Unemployed
P6	25-30	Male	Gumbu	Five times	Employed
FDG4					
P 1	30-35	Male	Shakadza	Twice	Unemployed
P 2	25-30	Male	Muraluwe	Five times	Employed
P 3	18-25	Female	Mabvete	Five times	Self-employed
P 4	18-25	Female	Gumbu	Thrice	Unemployed
P 5	25-30	Male	Bale	Once	Unemployed
P6	25-30	Male	Tshiungani	Four times	Self-employed
FDG5					
P 1	25-30	Female	Muswodi	Twice	Self-employed
P 2	18-25	Male	Makavhini	Twice	Employed
P 3	25-30	Male	Doreen	Four times	Self-employed
P 4	30-35	Male	Pointdrift	Six times	Unemployed
P 5	25-30	Male	Alldays	Five times	Unemployed
P6	18-25	Female	Madimbo	Five times	Unemployed

Since the study is grounded on community radio and youth on economic and social empowerment, it was pertinent for the researcher to find out about the employment status of the participants. Data indicate that amongst thirty ($n=30$) participants from focus group discussions, about 12 participants (40%) are unemployed, highlighting a major economic concern and the potential for community radio to act as an economic empowerment tool in Musina rural areas, about 9 participants (30%) were self-employed, 6 participants (20%) were employed, and another 3 participants (10%) were students. This highlights the necessity for community radio to act as a tool for development in rural areas, thereby fulfilling its mandate for community development as pointed by (Sharma, 2018).

In rural areas such as Musina, where most of the youth are unemployed while others are self-employed, community radio becomes a tool to drive change. A pertinent question arising is how does *Musina FM* contribute to economically challenged areas with unemployment rates? Community radio may play a role in empowering people through workshops and in designing training-based programmes to create employment opportunities.

5.2.2 Radio station officials' demographics

Table 5.2 Demographics characteristics of semi-structured interviews participants

Participants	Age	Gender	Position	Experience in Musina FM
R1	25-30	Female	Presenter	Seven years
R2	30-35	Female	Producer	Five months
R3	18-25	Male	Producer	Six months
R4	25-30	Female	Presenter	Four years
R5	30-35	Male	Presenter	One year six months
R6	25-30	Female	Producer	Five years
R7	30-35	Male	Manager 2	Fourteen years
R8	25-30	Male	Manager 1	Five Years

Eight ($n=8$) *Musina FM* employees participated via semi-structured interviews. It was pertinent to capture their age, gender, position held at *Musina FM* and a number of years they have been working for the radio station. The participants' ages fell into three categories: 18–25 years (12.5%, $n=1$), 25–30 years (50%, $n=4$), and 30–35 years (37.5%, $n=3$). The majority (50%) were aged 25–30, followed by 30–35, while only one participant (12.5%) was in the youngest age group (18–25). This diverse age range contributed to a broad understanding of *Musina FM*'s programmes and their role in empowering young people in Musina.

The gender distribution was equal, with 50% ($n=4$) of participants being female and 50% ($n=4$) male. Participants held various roles at the station, including presenters, producers, managers, and promotional assistants, offering diverse insights into the station's programming and its impact. Their years of experience ranged from a few months to over a decade, providing a spectrum of perspectives on the station's operations, programming strategies, and contribution to social and economic empowerment in the region. This variation in demographic and professional profiles

enriched the study's findings, highlighting how *Musina FM* employees view their roles in fostering youth empowerment.

5.3 Community radio programmes for youth empowerment

The findings of this study are based on five identified themes which are derived from the objective of the study and analysed deductively, objectively, theoretically and thematically. As depicted in *Figure 5.1* below, themes are based on the aim of the study which is portrayed in (Purple colour), research objectives portrayed in (Orange colour) and their dimensions portrayed in (Blue colour).

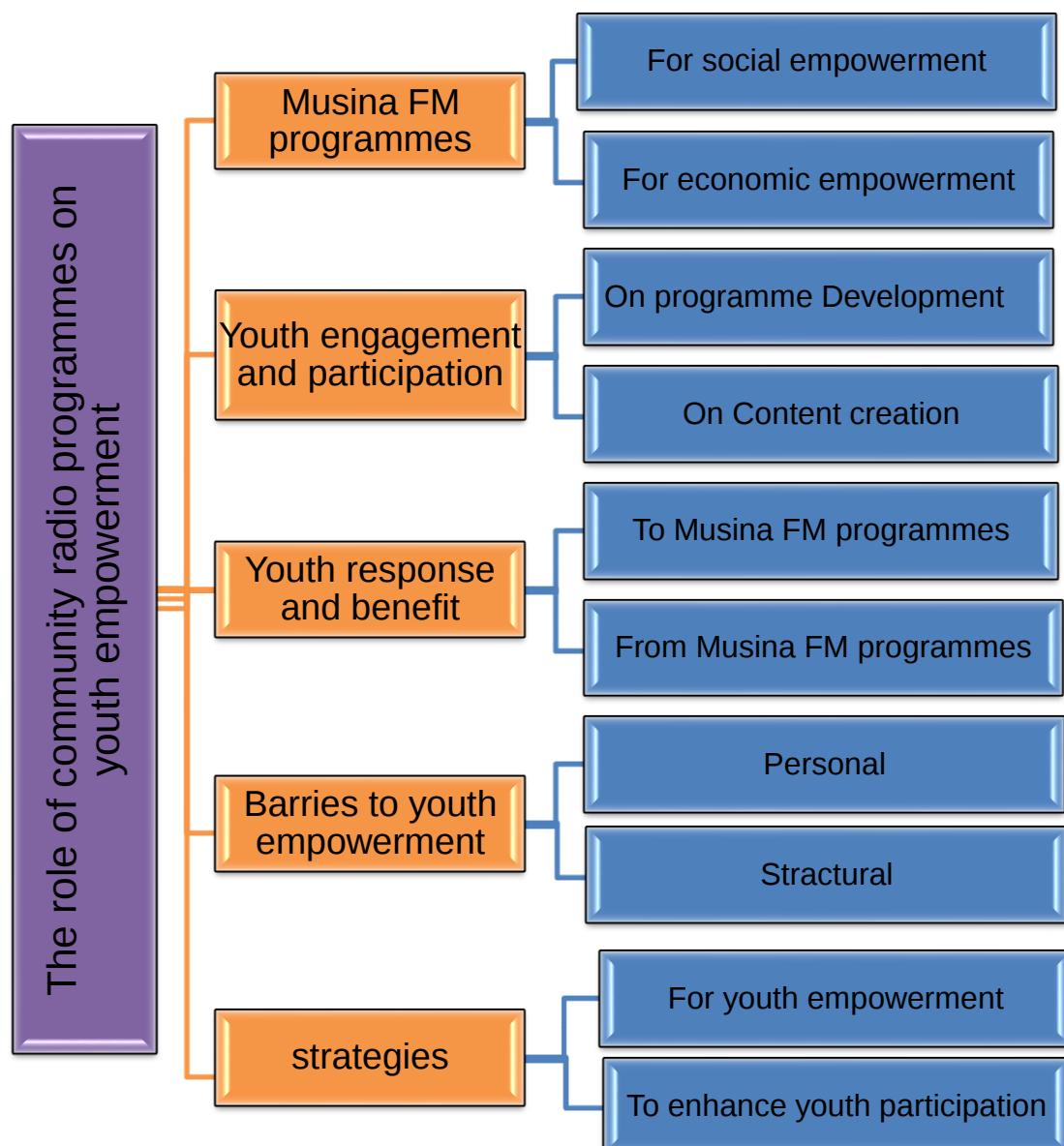


Figure 5.1 A thematic presentation of the findings

Each theme explores specific aspects of community radio's role in youth empowerment, offering a structured lens for analysis. The first theme, *Community radio programmes for youth empowerment*, focuses on the range of programmes offered by *Musina FM*, highlighting their contributions to both social and economic empowerment. The second theme, *Youth engagement and participation*, examines the involvement of youth in programme development and content creation, showcasing their active role in shaping media outputs. The third theme, *Youth response and benefit*, addresses how youth interact with and gain from *Musina FM* programmes, detailing their experiences both in contributing to and benefiting from these initiatives.

The fourth theme, *Barriers to youth empowerment*, identifies challenges faced by young people in leveraging community radio as a tool for empowerment, particularly in navigating structural and contextual constraints through *Musina FM's* programming. Finally, the fifth theme, *Strategies*, focuses on actionable approaches for enhancing youth empowerment and participation, emphasising solutions for deepening the station's impact on young audiences. These themes collectively provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how *Musina FM* contributes to youth empowerment in the Musina region. These themes are visually presented on *Figure 5.1* as depicted below.

The themes portrayed above were analysed through the lens of empowerment theory as the main theoretical framework guiding the study. Since this study used the interpretivism paradigm, the researcher also applied the axiological assumptions, which allowed the researcher to draw on empowerment constructs to render visible issues that go beyond the semantic articulations of the participants, as indicated in (Braun & Clarke, 2012; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006), cited in Zethi (2023).

5.3.1. Musina FM programmes

The main aim of this study was to explore the role of *Musina FM* programmes on youth social and economic empowerment in rural areas. As pointed out in the introductory chapter, the recent Quarterly Labour Force Survey (2024) indicates a high youth unemployment rate in South Africa, which in rural areas is proliferated by poor access to information and resources, poverty, and inadequate education and skills development (Statistics South Africa, 2024). Additionally, the literature argues that community radio programmes as a tool for development, if used to their full capacity, may address challenges that young people are facing in rural Musina. Through data analysis, the theme of community radio programmes for youth social and economic empowerment emerged. This theme seeks to answer the following research objective: ***To explore Musina FM programmes aimed at social and economic youth empowerment in Musina rural areas.*** To

address this theme, several programmes aimed at youth empowerment were identified and are depicted and summarised in *Table 5.3*.

Table 5.3 summarises the key programmes offered by *Musina FM* aimed at empowering youth in the Musina region. It highlights the focus areas of each programme, time allocated to each programme and the presenters involved, providing a clear overview of how the station seeks to address youth issues through its programmes.

The finding of this study indicate that *Musina FM* offers a range of programmes designed to socially and economically empower young people residing in rural Musina. As emerged from the data, programmes such as *Youth to the Future*, *Tshidziki tsha Mafhungo*, *Tsumbavhuyo*, *Areaganeng* and *Mulisa wa Ndele* address fundamental issues that affect youth living in Musina rural areas. These challenges include, unemployment, drug abuse, crime, business ideas, financial skills, motivations and entrepreneurship, spirituality upliftment, morals, faith, resistance, personal development, and community involvement.

5.3.1.1 Economic empowerment

As noted in literature, community radio stations if used correctly, may promote education, health, business ideas, financial skills, entrepreneurship agriculture, and scarce skills development via collaborations with local organisations, which are vital to community social and economic development (Timalsina & Pradhan, 2019). Thus, during data analysis, economic empowerment emerged as the subtheme on the role of community radio programmes for youth empowerment in rural Musina.

As mentioned by Participant 2 during a focus group discussion, in *Musina FM*,

There are programmes called Youth to the Future and Areaganeng, these programmes speak to the youth because they give us advice on what we should do to overcome the challenges that we are facing (P2, FGD2).

This statement resonates with most participants from focus group discussions who seem to agree that *Musina FM* does have programmes that are aimed at youth economic empowerment in rural areas, pointing to programmes such as *Youth to the Future*, *Areaganeng* and *Tsumbavhuyo* amongst others. These programmes offer young people training related to business funding, financial literacy and entrepreneurship skills.

Table 5.3: Overview of Musina FM Youth Empowerment Programmes

Musina FM Programmes	Description of the Programme	Presenter(s)
1. Youth to the Future 20h00 – 21h00 Monday-Friday	Youth to the Future is a programme dealing with youth development in Musina. This programme deals with unemployment, skills development, economic empowerment, business ideas, financial skills, motivations and entrepreneurship. It focuses on engaging with the younger generation to discuss how they can improve their economic status through radio. The programme also brings in multiple stakeholders, such as business networks, to offer guidance about entrepreneurship and how they can secure business funding.	Zwiswa Mphaphuli
2.Tshidziki Tsha Mafhungo 18h00-19h00 Monday-Friday	Tshidziki Tsha Mafhungo is a programme aimed at news that deals with local issues people face on an everyday basis through information and interaction. Issues covered here includes, drug abuse, rehabilitation, crime, health, motivations and information are covered amongst others. These programmes allow youth to be informed thereby contributing to their social empowerment.	Tshidziki Team of Presenters
3. Tsumbavhuyo 12h00-15h00 Monday-Friday	Tsumbavhuyo is a programme that deals with showing a community direction through Informative, inspiration, motivation, and emotional support to people who are going through challenges. The show invite guest to have motivational sessions with young people. The programme incorporates conversation and debate on social issues and economic issues through which listeners can express their opinions or even make suggestions for solutions.	Elisa Neguyuni
4. Areaganeng 09h00-12h00 Monday-Friday	A 3-hour programme that tackles critical youth issues, disability social empowerment collaboration Job Readiness training, community building, mentorships, raising awareness regarding diseases, advocacy and creating community dialogue. Broadcasting from Monday to Friday, the show offers youth a stable forum through which they can discuss issues affecting their community. The programme also focuses on entrepreneurship by providing an opportunity for young people to share their business ideas and seek mentorship from industry experts.	Rofhiwa Munyai

5. Mulisa wa Ndele 06h00-09h00 Sundays	Mulisa Wandele is a programme that brings youth discussions on spirituality and moral values Spirituality upliftment, Morals, Faith, Resistance, to discipline their homes under the leadership of pastors and community leaders, amongst others. Through faith-based discussions rooted in life choices, ethical dilemmas, and strong behaviour, youth are encouraged to engage with actions that lead towards growth and resilience. This programme seeks to lift young people out of their predicaments by offering spiritual growth.	Freddy Mudau
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Another young participant from focus group discussion 3 disclosed that,

Musina FM has programmes such as Youth to the Future, which is designed to encourage young businesspeople to embark on business since this programme invites other young people to come and demonstrate to our young people that we can also make it in business. brings top people so young ones may learn about business issues through motivations (P5, FGD3).

These findings suggest that the programming of *Musina FM* aimed at youth economic empowerment offers practical advice and resonates with the actual experiences of its young audience residing in rural Musina. During the semi-structured interviews with *Musina FM* employees, most of the staff were on the same page as the young people with regard to programmes that communicated effectively in regard to the promotion of youth economic empowerment. As emerged from Semi-structured Interview, Respondent 5, who is one of the producers at *Musina FM*, said,

We Have Youth to the Future, and Areaganeng show where we discuss different issues; we invite people such as traditional healers, young business owners and other organisations such as outreach organisation which deals with the empowerment of youth through skills development programmes such as computer literacy, building, sewing and beauty. These programmes also provide motivational speakers to motivate our youth. We also give the slots to an organisation that deals with financial funding for business so that we can engage the youth. We also open the line for youth to call in, but because Areaganeng broadcasts in the morning, it is difficult for them to call. However, during youth to the future, the youth call in because it is late (R5, SSI5).

The above comment resonates with the views of young people residing in rural areas of Musina. Programmes such as “*Youth to the Future*” and “*Areaganeng*” serve as an economic empowerment platform for young people, demonstrating the effectiveness of Community radio as participation platform which foster engagement between various stakeholders in discussions

meant to improve young people's lives. This is in line with empowerment theory which view participation with others to achieve goals, gain access to information and resources as means of achieving social change (Rappaprt,1989) with the focus on participation allows young people to take an active part in conversation, fostering a sense of involvement or ownership and community, leading to gaining skills and knowledge that can be used to change young people which is the outcome of empowerment.

Notwithstanding these encouraging features, some participants felt that, although *Musina FM* programmes play a role in economically empowering them, the station's programmes inadequately addressed pressing issues. For instance, some participants expressed that, although unemployment, skills development and business are discussed, it lacks the consistency and depth necessary for lasting impact, underlining a supposed lack in the station's initiatives to offer continuous, thorough debates on urgent issues as stated by Participant 1 in the focus group discussion one who said,

Some topics are not covered enough. For instance, if we talk about unemployment it only comes sometimes; I believe that if this topic is given more time, it will be able to help youth in Musina not only to stay away from troubles but also get jobs through maybe a programme that offer young people jobs (P1, FGD1).

This criticism aligns with Cadiz's (2018) perspective, which emphasises the need for community media to adopt a consistent strategy to address community problems, thereby promoting genuine empowerment. While *Musina FM* programmes cover a wide range of topics pertinent to economically equip young people, improvements could be made by ensuring more in-depth, ongoing coverage of critical issues to facilitate a comprehensive exploration of solutions and foster a participatory learning environment (Banda, 2021). Introducing a segment that helps young people to secure piece jobs would help in bridging unemployment rate in rural areas which, according (StasSA, 2024) is proliferated in rural areas by poor access to information and resources, inadequate education, and lack of skills development options.

Despite this criticism, many participants from focus group discussions provided compelling stories illustrating how *Musina FM's* programming specifically *Youth to the Future and Areaganeng* has positively influenced their attitudes and behaviours towards business and self-empowerment. For many participants from focus group discussions, the station has become a platform for alternative narratives that promote empowerment. As one listener expressed

Because of shows like Youth to the Future, my perception towards unemployment has change. before this programme, I used to think that I only can only be survive through employment but now I understand that there are skills that I can use for self-employment (P1, FG2).

The above participant's experiences illustrate how *Musina FM*'s programmes can act as catalysts for economic empowerment by promoting self-sufficiency and cultivating a mindset of independence and resourcefulness among young people. Through targeted and engaging content, *Musina FM* helps equip its audience with the knowledge and confidence needed to actively contribute to their personal development and their communities. This aligns with the empowerment theory (Zimmerman, 2000) which emphasises the role of resources and opportunities in fostering a sense of control and agency at the personal and community levels. Encouraging positive behaviours and providing tailored content reinforces *Musina FMs*, and the transformative potential of community radio as an agent of social and economic change (Moyo, 2021).

5.3.1.2 Social empowerment

Among the main findings of the study is that *Musina FM* has been instrumental in encouraging social empowerment among young people from rural areas. In this sense, Social empowerment through community radio entails involving young people in the planning until implementation of radio programmes that motivate young people to gain confidence, develop abilities to make choices and take control of their lives while also building sense of belonging, promote social cohesion, allowing them to play an active role in influencing their local communities (Bulani, 2021; Kankam & Attuh, 2024).

The findings shows that the majority of participants from focus group discussions frequently mentioned programmes like "*Mulisa Wandele*", "*Tsumbavhuyo*" and *Tshidziki tsha Mafhungo* as sources of inspiration, motivation, and emotional support. These programmes appear to play a significant role in helping young people develop resilience and agency. Emphasising the role played by these programmes, some participants indicated that,

Through listening to Tshidziki tsha Mafhungo, I have changed a lot; my attitude towards life has changed, and I now understand that situations do not remain the same (P1, FGD3).

In support to Participant 1 from focus group discussion 3, during focus group discussion 5, participant 2 also expressed that,

Programmes such as Tshidziki tsha Mafhungo and Tsumbavhuyo provide us with information that is happening in our municipality like when there was a strike recently, they inform us, and our mind change when it comes the governing party (P2, FGD5).

These comments illustrate how community radio can shift perspectives and inspire hope, reinforcing the belief that challenges can be overcome. Banda (2021) asserts that participation, which community radio promotes, is a powerful tool for empowering marginalised groups and enhancing self-efficacy. As emerged from the data, *Musina FM*'s programmes enable young listeners to take control of their lives by sharing stories of personal growth and resilience, thereby transforming their outlook on their circumstances as mentioned by one young focus group participant who feels that,

Mulisa wandela changed me because it taught me that for you to get something, you need to work hard while you are praying and waiting on what you want. So, this programme changed me in a way that I view some situations in life (P2, FGD1).

These narratives emphasise the potential of community radio to effect change by influencing the attitudes and behaviours of its audience. Through its initiatives, *Musina FM* reflects the core principles of empowerment by not only imparting knowledge but also facilitating a dialogue that encourages self-reflection and community involvement, as indicated in (Cadiz, 2018). A more strategic approach to content delivery, ensuring that significant issues are revisited and explored in depth over time, could amplify the impact of these programmes. Ongoing engagements could lead to more profound and lasting changes in the attitudes and behaviours of young listeners.

While *Musina FM* addresses numerous youth issues through its programming, there remains a need for deeper coverage of certain topics deemed essential for youth social empowerment. Areas such as career guidance, education, and continuous discussions about drug abuse require more attention. This emphasises the importance of educational support in rural areas, as pointed out by a few participants who mentioned that,

The radio must cover issues related to school through motivation so that they can encourage the youth to go to school. It should be talked about more. A programme that speaks to career guidance should be introduced (P4, FGD1).

Musina FM should focus much more on the programmes that encourage or guide young people regarding education and career guidance since young people are not aware of the career available to them (P5, FGD2).

In this context, some of the views in *Musina FM* are consonant with young people's views on the need for educational support programmes. Some staff indicated that, although the radio is playing its role of socially empowering youth in Musina rural areas, there is still a need for the radio to improve in order to play its role to fully. One respondent from semi-structured interviews state that,

There is much that we need to change in our programmes. The youth programmes are only an hour, and we need to change that to at least two hours so that we can engage with the youth, especially when it comes to education and career guidance (R7, SS17).

Another respondent who is a producer at *Musina FM* agrees with the above view, stating that since *Musina FM* programmes require to address educational aspect within the community, both young people and the station can co-create programmes that seek to address this aspect. According to this respondent,

Musina FM can have a day where we sit down with youth of Musina rural areas and go through the programmes that we have and identify the programmes that we can agree on, and this programme can address issues of education in each segment (R3, SS13).

These perspectives from both focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews indicate that the station should prioritise educational issues, as they are crucial for the overall development and future opportunities of local youth. By incorporating more content related to education, skills development, and career planning, *Musina FM* can effectively guide young people towards more positive and fulfilling paths, which is the essence of empowerment. The above comments further indicate the need for the station to involve its audience (young people) in a decision-making process, reinforcing the concept of empowerment as participation which according to literature (Rappaport, 1984; Zimmerman, 1993), at community levels allows people to collectively access community resources such as media. The staff at *Musina FM* also recognised the station's limitations in comprehensively addressing other youth-related issues. They noted challenges such as logistical constraints and insufficient support from local government, which hinder the station's ability to provide more extensive coverage. As mentioned by one of *Musina FM* staff,

It is not easy to run programmes that entirely empower the rural areas since other stakeholders, especially local government, do not have time to come to the station even if we give them the opportunity (R5, SS11).

This comment highlights a significant barrier to the station's efforts to involve external stakeholders in youth empowerment initiatives. Community radio stations often rely on collaborations with local businesses, government agencies, and NGOs to offer diverse and impactful programming (Mdawe, 2014). The lack of engagement from local government not only limits access to resources and expertise but also reduces the potential for addressing systemic challenges faced by youth, such as unemployment and limited educational opportunities.

Overcoming these obstacles requires a more collaborative approach that involves multiple stakeholders to enhance the station's capacity for effective youth empowerment. This strategy aligns with the empowerment theory, which underscores the importance of including all relevant parties in the participation process to achieve meaningful and sustainable change (Bessette, 2004). By forging partnerships with local government, educational institutions, and community organisations, *Musina FM* can provide more comprehensive support and resources to its young audience. Additionally, actively involving youth in the programme development process ensuring that the content remains relevant, engaging, and responsive to the evolving needs of the community. Conceptually, this reflects the empowerment as an outcome of participation as indicated in reflective participation where groups, especially marginalised gain equal access to and control of resources that will improve their lives (Cattaneo & Chapman, 2010).

Musina FM has made significant improvements in addressing youth issues and shaping positive attitudes and behaviours among its audience, there is a clear need for more strategic and consistent efforts. Enhanced collaboration with stakeholders and deeper exploration of critical topics such as education and career guidance will better empower young people in the Musina rural area. The station's ongoing commitment to integrating participation into its initiatives holds the potential to cultivate a more engaged and empowered youth population, thereby contributing to the broader development of the community. The literature emphasises the need for community structures such as community radio to collaborate with people in order to create their own opportunities. Through these collaborations, empowerment can be achieved. This calls for active engagement of young people in both programmes' development and content creations rather than just being content consumers.

5.3.2. Youth engagement and participation in Musina FM programmes

As pointed out in the introductory chapter of this study, community radio is not a tool that supports the community in a directly socially ameliorative way; rather, its purpose is to promote self-help initiatives within communities and increase the community's ability to see its challenges and potential and utilise that ability to come up with solutions (Anderson, 2020). Thus, community engagement and involvement in community radio programming is significant. The empowerment theory centered in participation and Mutual learning. The literature, Gumucio, Dagron and Tufte (2006); Lopes (2020) assert that mutual learning involves sharing knowledge and experiences among all participants including youth, community members and professionals. Here each participants perspectives, ideas and views are valued to foster a collaborative learning atmosphere in the development process. Given the need for community radio stations to promote diversity and inclusivity in their content offerings, the engagement and participation of young people in the creation of the programmes and its content becomes important. During data analysis, youth engagement and participation in *Musina FM* programmes emerged as the main theme with subthemes on youth participation on programmes and content creation and youth engagement with the radio programmes. This theme was guided and sought to answer the following research objectives: To explore how the *Musina FM* programmes engage and empower the youth through its content, style, and delivery?

5.3.2.1 Youth engagement in content

This subtheme emerged to answer one of the key questions in this study: How do young people engage with *Musina FM*? The findings of the study indicate that young people in the Musina area engage with *Musina FM* to varying degrees. Most of young listeners reported interaction with the station through multiple channels, including call-ins, social media, and community events. This multifaceted participation aligns with the contemporary, multi-platform nature of community radio in recent time, which seeks to remain relevant and accessible (Buckley, 2020). As noted below, one of the participants from the focus group discussion mentioned that,

I engage through call-in but most of the time I prefer commenting on TikTok during the broadcast (P5, FGD4).

This statement highlights a preference for digital and interactive engagement over traditional methods such as live call-ins or attendance at station-run events. Particularly among younger audiences, who are more likely to utilise social media for engagement, the use of social media

platforms such as TikTok Hub exemplifies how digital platforms can enhance youth engagement and participation while increasing the reach of community radio.

Despite these avenues for interaction, participants expressed a consensus that *Musina FM* could improve its engagement with the youth. While some listeners actively interact with the station, many others reported minimal involvement, indicating that,

Although I do listen to the radio, I do not engage the radio at all (P3, FGD3).

Other participants from a different focus group discussions shared the same point, indicating that,

I do not engage with the radio (P1, FGD5).

These comments indicate that although *Musina FM* provides valuable information, it is not fully leveraging its potential to foster more interactive and participatory engagement among young listeners. Qualitative findings from the focus groups discussions revealed that approximately 60% of participants felt that the station could do more to engage them actively, especially through social media. Although some listeners interact with the station actively, many others seem to have little interaction at all. This disparity suggests a possible mismatch between the programmes of the station and needs of young people. Here the question raised is that, is the possible mismatch as a result of not involving young people in programmes development? This is against the main argument of this study which state that, for *Musina FM* to achieve youth empowerment in rural Musina, its programmes ought to be aligned with the needs of the community, particularly the young people. The empowerment theory argues that, at the core of empowerment through participation lies the importance of community driven initiatives where people, especially the marginalised play an active role in shaping social and economic situations that influence their lives (Cattaneo & Chapmans, 2010). The findings show the continuation of little engagement with the content of the radio with participant 4 from focus group discussion 2 mentioned that,

I do not engage through the programmes but interact with the radio when they have outside broadcasting (P4, FGD2).

This response indicates that although the young population in Musina prefer new media, such as social media platforms, to engage with the radio, traditional methods may still be used to engage youth who ordinarily cannot access social media. Data emerged from semi-structured interviews with *Musina FM* staff revealed that the radio uses several initiatives aimed at enhancing young listener involvement. These initiatives include roadshows, annual general meetings (AGMs), and youth dialogue facilitation. One of the staff mentioned that,

We go out to the youth through other activities such as youth dialogue; Musina got talent to engage the youth in Musina rural. We also consult the youth through annual general meetings where we come together, and the community choose the programmes that we need to put on the radio (R7, SS17).

This approach reflects empowerment as participation which emphasizes community involvement through direct interaction and dialogue (Cadiz, 2015). By bringing the station to the community through roadshows and visits, *Musina FM* strives to engage its audience in familiar settings, potentially inspiring more active participation from the youth.

The above view indicate that *Musina FM* seem to use strategies such as youth dialogue and other events to engage youth in its content. Perhaps this calls for the need to include young people in content creation of *Musina FM* programmes. As emerged from both the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, participants and respondents share similar views which speaks to the involvement of young people in content creation. This is in line with the concept of empowerment which assert that a true empowerment only happens when beneficiary of change takes charge of their lives. As mentioned by respondent 1 during semi-structured interview,

The radio must have a programme that is produced by the youth for the youth (R1, SS11).

This view was supported by most of focus group discussion participants like participants 5 in focus group 3 and participants 6 in focus group 2 who mentioned that *Musina FM* should find an alternative way of producing their content. In addition to this, participant 4 from focus group discussion 5 was clear, mentioning that,

We must be given the opportunity to contribute to their programmes, and they should also listen to us because community radio is there to help us," one listener underlined in response (P4, FGD5).

These comments resonate with the main argument of this study which argues that *Musina FM* can only empower young people in rural Musina by having programmes that are aligned with their needs. Involving young people in content creation as active participants rather than passive participants may assist the station to create content which reflects the needs of young people in Musina rural areas. In this instance, empowerment theory would argue that, involving young people in all stages of content creation would make them feel in control of their lives, thereby gaining access and control over their community resources as pointed out in (Cornell Empowerment Group, 1989). This is in accordance with the literature, Carpentier, (2018) indicate

that the concerned citizen should be involved in development process to make decision concerning their lives. Thus, in line with this view, involving young people in programmes development emerged as the subtheme under youth participation in programme development and content creation is presented and discussed below.

5.3.2.2 Youth participation in programme development and content creation

One of the core tenets of empowerment is participation which advocates for the involvement of people in all stages of development process (Molale,2021). Thus, in a development that concerns them, people should take the centre stage in planning, design, implementation and evaluation of such projects. This according to Burger (2017) result in sharing power through open dialogue. Burger (2017) further emphasises that participatory communication which in this study is also used interchangeably with empowerment, ensure that marginalised people are given voice and platform to raise their concerns. This claim reinforces the subtheme of youth participation in the development of *Musina FM* programmes.

As emerged from the data, the need of *Musina FM* to better match its material to the interests and needs of the young people living in the Musina area became a central theme running through the research. More youth-produced content would help the station to connect more deeply with its young audience, thus both young people and staff members stressed the need of including such material. As suggested by one of the employees during semi-structured interviews 1,

Maybe on weekends we can have a youth show where we can have a programme that is produced by the youth themselves (R1, SSI1).

In accordance with this view, one of the young people from focus group discussions mentioned that,

I think Musina Fm should introduce a programme that speaks to our journey and identity because we do not know where we come from (P5, FGD5).

These recommendations reflect a more general view that actively involving young people in programme development could promote a stronger sense of ownership and relevance, so complementing the ideas of participatory communication (Banda, 2021).

Young participation in content creation guarantees that programming reflects not only their experiences but also the particular problems they encounter. Crucially for empowering young people and advancing a sense of agency, *Musina FM* can provide a forum for young people to

share their stories, challenges, and ambitions by helping them to create youth-led shows. This strategy is in line with Cadiz's (2015) advocacy for inclusive and dialogic media content, which underlines the need of media acting as a forum where underprivileged groups may express their worries and participate in the empowerment process. Furthermore, young-generated content can be a kind of peer education whereby listeners may connect to the experiences of others in their age range, so influencing their attitudes and behaviour.

Although the data indicated the need to involve young people in content creation and programmes development. Staff members reported mixed findings regarding the effectiveness of these initiatives. A recurring concern was the difficulty in attracting young people to AGMs and other official events. From semi-structured interviews, several *Musina FM* staff mentioned that even though they strive to engage youth in choosing programmes to mark their participation, Semi-structured interview revealed that young people are reluctant from attending Annual General meetings as pointed by the respondent 4 who mentioned that,

We hold an annual general meeting with the community where the community itself choose the programmes, but youth do not really attend the AGM, so it is difficult to engage them in choosing programmes since they seem not interested (R4, SSI4).

In addition, another employee mentioned that,

Yearly, we have an Annual General Meeting where we invite people and youth to come and engage with the community and assist us with choosing programmes, so we consult with our people, but youth sometimes do not attend (R6, SSI6).

These observations from semi-structured interviews suggest that conventional participation strategies, such as AGMs, may not resonate with younger audiences. Carpentier (2018) argues that true and effective participation involves active involvement and shared decision-making, not merely access to information. The low youth turnout at AGMs indicates that these events may not provide a suitable or appealing environment for youth participation, underscoring the need for more innovative and youth-centric methods of involvement. Perhaps introducing online platforms as a way to participate in AGM may enhance youth participation in programme development.

For young listeners to voice their concerns and influence programming effectively, alternative strategies such as digital engagement and informal community events may provide a more conducive and relevant platform to provide a space for participation as the means to achieve empowerment. While some *Musina FM* staff demonstrated awareness of participation

foundational concepts, others exhibited conflicting applications of these principles. For instance, one staff member mentioned that:

It is difficult to understand the participation concept, but youth in Musina do not take things seriously (R2, SS12).

This perspective implies a perception that young people are disengaged rather than considering how the station might adapt its practices to foster greater youth involvement. Such viewpoints could hinder the station's efforts to create an environment conducive to participatory communication, where young individuals feel valued and motivated to engage actively participate in stations activities.

Conversely, some staff members recognised the necessity for active participation, which is the main tenet of empowerment, mentioning that,

We go out to the youth through activities such as youth dialogue; Musina has the talent to engage the youth effectively (R3, SS13).

The above statement demonstrate that *Musina FM* do put effort in engaging young people residing in rural areas through various initiatives. These initiatives align with the emphasis on dialogue, inclusion, and collective action advocated by participation (Carpentier, 2018; Cadiz, 2018). However, the inconsistency in applying participation at *Musina FM* suggests that the station may focus more on inviting the community to predefined events rather than co-creating content with youth or including them in decision-making from the outset.

Effective participation, as highlighted by Msibi and Penzhorn (2010), requires that media outlets involve communities at all levels, including in programme creation, planning, production, and evaluation, thereby empowering participants to take control and ownership in the process. This view is reinforced in Burger (2017) who opined that for participants to take ownership, participation and dialogue should be based on the authenticity and allow previously underdoped people to voice their concerns and idea in the development process.

The participants views highlight the need for *Musina FM* to adopt an alternative engagement and participation. This calls for *Musina FM* to develop more inclusive policies that actively involve young people in programmes development and content creation from a bottom-up approach to development. In accordance with literature, McKee (2016) opined that this approach promotes a democratic process where people collectively take decision as equals. Hence empowerment theory advocate that, participants should be viewed as players instead of clients or beneficiaries

while professionals should also be seen as and collaborators instead of experts (Zimmerman, 2012). Through this, the station can foster a sense of responsibility and empowerment among its listeners. This approach not only enhances participation but also helps *Musina FM* fulfil its goal of providing a platform for youth empowerment in the Musina area. The engagement of young people in coproduction of programmes and participation, may change how young people respond to *Musina FM* programmes which may benefit young people in achieving empowerment.

5.4. Youth response and benefits from *Musina FM* programmes

The previous thematic analysis explored youth engagement and participation through community radio programmes, paving a way in understanding how young people engage and participate in radio for their own empowerment. But how do youth respond and benefit from programmes? Based on the data obtained, it is clear that community radio is playing a positive role in youth empowerment, but what more can be done. As emerged from data, youth respond positively to and benefit from engaging with community radio for their own empowerment. Community radio has been acknowledged for its ability to elevate marginalised voices and promote democratic involvement while also empowering local communities. In this context, youth participation is not only getting involved, but also about fostering essential skills development, building social empowerment. It is therefore crucial to investigate how engaging with *Musina FM* leads to increased engagement and active response, positive behavioural changes shift in attitudes towards life and ambition, practical information and empowerment, building knowledge and community participation. This in response with the following research objective: To understand how the youth respond and benefits from the programmes in terms of their knowledge, attitude, and behaviour.

5.4.1. Increased engagement and active response

The data confirmed that *Musina FM* programmes are of great significance to the youth in Musina rural areas, which in turn stimulates active participation among young audiences. The station acts as a bridge, making sure youths are connected to pertinent subjects and are able to raise them with friends, parents and even community heads. Through addressing issues such as unemployment, drug abuse and other social problems, the youths are given a platform to express their views as they debate the issues and questions raised by *Musina FM*, as well as those they already see as crucial to their lives. The programmes benefit many youths by keeping them updated on events and, therefore, remaining active members of their societies. Such programmes do not only empower people but mobilise them to act in their communities. One participant mentioned that:

I engage in discussion with my mates but seldom since the radio is not that popular around our area. When the reception is clear, I go over topics that are very relevant to us, such as employment opportunities or activities around the place, and I inform friends about the issues. I think that with greater accessibility, a greater number of people here could follow regularly, and there could be a greater amount of engagement in working through issues that concern us directly (P6, FGD5).

This statement expresses the radio penetration challenges and the strength of radios where they are available. This remark resonates with the generally held view by youth in using the platform as a forum where the users accompany pertinent issues. Thus, *Musina FM* becomes another channel through which the youth contribute to the general discourse of society. Even when access in certain regions is limited, the *Musina FM* has been effective in encouraging limits of commitment and collective understanding of the audience. Young people engage in conversations that changes their lives as indicated by the above participants. The engagement brought about by *Musina FM* is consistent with findings by Gumucio-Dagron (2001), who states that community radio serves as a locus for the under resourced to be heard concerning social and economic issues. *Musina FM's* purpose of promoting the employment and personal development themes is in support of this as people discuss them with their colleagues. This community radio model, as also discussed by Buckley (UNESCO, 2020), empowers marginalised youths from rural areas to voice their grievances and participate in group discussions on a variety of topics, increasing their level of awareness of issues affecting the community and all its members.

5.4.2. Practical information and empowerment

Another finding that was imperative from the research was that apart from the direct benefits, which include encouraging the youth, *Musina FM* also had information forums that dealt with topics like business, education, and development, which are crucial in empowering the youth. This resonates with the study done by Fraser and Restrepo-Estrada (2001), who pointed out that community radio can help fill the information gap in remote areas and complement *Musina FM's* efforts to provide practical tips on matters such as business and career. As pointed out before, some programmes such as *Youth to the Future* and *Tshidiki tsha Mafhungo* were brought in to walk the audience through some steps, like opening a business and getting project financing and guiding young people to overcome various challenges. From focus group discussions, one of the participants mentioned that:

I am a changed person as a result of listening to programmes like Tshidizki tsha Mafhungo. This programme has helped me to change my view of life and made me believe that

nothing is impossible. I have been taught how to deal with challenges that I thought I would never be able to face in my life, and now, such challenges do not scare me anymore. I have heard other people's experiences and their advice, and this has made me want to improve their lives and become a good person (P6, FGD2).

This statement implies that *Tshidizki tsha Mafhungo* type programmes focus on imparting life skills and other necessary tools to the youths to confront various challenges in social life. Such activities provide chances for counsel in a designed rather than random fashion, assisting the youth to become more self-sufficient and resourceful. Additionally, *Youth to the Future*, for example, helps young people to orientate themselves with issues such as business registration, business structuring, and the features of the local job market more easily. Such information not only enhances individual skills but also boosts community productivity since more youths are becoming self-employed. This in empowerment theory depicts one of its important assumptions, stating that the process of empowerment is assumed to be a lifelong endeavour (Rappaport, 1987). This notion has been supported by scholars such as Molale (2021) and Masibi (2011), who noted that the end goal of empowerment as participation which sometimes may be referred to as participatory communication should be reaching mutual understanding and providing a solution to the identified predicament. *Musina FM* provides young people with knowledge that they can use to better their lives, hence they become self-employed.

5.4.3 Building knowledge and community participation

The aim of this study was to explore the role of community radio programmes in achieving social and economic empowerment. The study explained social empowerment through community radio as a process of involving young people in the implementation of initiatives that motivate young people to gain confidence, develop abilities to make choices and take control of their lives while also building a sense of belonging, promote social cohesion, allowing them to play an active role in influencing their local communities (Bulani, 2021; Kankam & Attuh, 2024). The question arise here is that how do *Musina FM* programmes empower youth through imparting knowledge that they can use to participate in their communities? The findings indicate that *Musina FM* has a significant impact on extending the knowledge scope of youths from rural areas and creates interest in local and national endeavours. In dispersing knowledge about problems of a local and universal nature, the station empowers young people in rural areas. The youth emphasised that the information they get from *Musina FM* is often better than that from other platforms such as social networks. One of the participants stated that,

After I have received the information about something, I become active because I can do something, I engage with my friends and see how we can help our communities (P6, FGD1).

This demonstrates how the station mobilises actions and opens up discussions based on knowledge. *Musina FM*'s emphasis on encoding continuity places local issues in relation to the overall national picture, thus creating a balanced perspective among the youth. Using young people's content, the station gets the youths to be active in discussing their place in society. Most of the conversations initiated by *Musina FM* encourage active citizenship among the youth, as they are able to speak about issues of local governance and community health.

In addition, the feeling of integration that *Musina FM* promotes has reinforced the cohesion of the community. This corroborates with Duncan and Seleokane's (2018) belief that community radios promote the people's sense of belonging and local culture. For the rural youths, the most appealing aspect of the station is that it enables the exchange of experiences and viewpoints, which facilitates their feeling of being part of a community. Empowerment theory concurs with this as pointed out in (Zimmerman, 2012) who posit that people can be empowered in both personal and community level. Community level entails fostering a sense of collective responsibility encourage active citizenship and support community driven activities. Hence through accessing community radio, which is a community resources, young people gain knowledge and use such knowledge to build their own communities.

5.4.4 Positive behavioural changes

From engaging in *Musina FM* programmes, young people have indicated that they respond in a positive manner as indicated by (P6, FGD5). This illustrates that *Musina FM* programmes have a positive effect on young people living in rural Musina. Hence positive behavioural change emerged as a subtheme. Thus, the study findings show that programmes such as *Mulisa Wandele* and *Tsumbavhuyo* have widely influenced the behaviour of young people by instilling some changes in how they think, thereby increasing their level of hope, faith and resilience. Through such programmes, young listeners get the support they need in the form of faith and local values. In one of the focus group discussions, most participants expressed their gratefulness to *Mulisa Wa Ndele* stating that with some of them saying that,

I had my prayers answered, through Mulisa Wandele, I realised that there is still God behind my existence, so it helped me pray for myself and have trust. The messages of the programme reassured me that just being tough, how difficult things may seem at times,

but infinitely rewarding faith is, and that feeling followed me during the times when it was needed the most. I have learned how, every week, the messages instil faith that there is a reason why attempts must be made. I do not just hear but listen so as to receive understanding and direction through the ears. This caused some transformation in me (P4, FGD5).

I started believing that nothing is purposeless, and that hope is a guiding principle; all events have their sequence and reason for occurring in that particular order in life (P6, FGD4).

The participants experiences presented above indicate that *Musina FM* programmes especially *Mulisa wa Ndele* do empower young people spiritually which allow them to positively change their attitude towards life in general. This change is a true reflection of empowerment-influence attitudinal change (Rappaport, 1985) Above all, faith can be a source of assistance and also be a motivating factor for pursuing a certain kind of lifestyle. Several young people have suggested that the *Mulisa wa Ndele* provide reassurance and wisdom, which helps them get through tough times and motivates them. For youth who are in tough situations, *Mulisa wa Ndele* and *Tsumbavhuyo* offers positive message and guidance and spiritual motivation which guide young people's personal beliefs and resistance. . This is supported by Moyo (2012), who argues that local stories, especially those found in the cultural and spiritual context can help local community to achieve social change. As *Musina FM* programmes utilise faith-based and encouraging selections, this is reminiscent of Moyo's research on how religion-centred mass media can bring about a feeling of strength and optimism within a society. The theory of empowerment emphasised this through cultural identity which according to Attuh and Kankam (2024) ; Olorunnisola *et al.* (2022) can helps the station better tailor its programming to account for listeners of diverse beliefs and origin which foster a sense of belonging and recognition by others and this equals to empowerment.

In addition, young people also have great respect for *Musina FM* programmes because they are devised to address the local community's drug problems, unemployment, and family issues. Many receive feedback in the form of change after internalising the messages where they avoid bad company and look for positive ways of coping as mentioned by P6 in focus group discussion 5 whom according to him,

Tshidziki Tsha Mafhungo gives us information related to drug abuse and other challenges that young people are facing in the area. They invite ex drug users who are now clean to

come and narrate their stories and by listening to these stories, able to see things in a different way (P6, FGD5).

Another participant from the same focus group discussion 5 also added that,

My attitude towards unemployment has changed and also my perception in life has changed since the I now understand that you can even make it through using your skills rather than having a job after one of the local youths was invited to motivate us in Youth to the Future (P1, FGD5).

The above comments emphasise the importance of telling local stories which young people can closely relate. This is in line with the general view in development communication which advocates that communities should use the asset exposed to them in order to develop themselves (Asset Based Community Development Approach). Thus, through inviting young people who overcome challenges in Musina region, young people in the area are influenced to positively change their behaviours. The youth are able to reconcile personal struggles with societal expectations as the same voices and issues resonate with them. Such a link eliminates behaviour modification only but also restores a sense of community to the affected individuals. Programmes such as *Tshidziki tsha Mafhungo* and *Youth to the Future* provides young people with information that change their lives, this in empowerment theory reflects imparting knowledge and information that people can use to shift their lives towards doing good.

5.4.5 Shift in attitudes towards life and ambition

In addition, the findings of the study showed that motivation programmes such as *Tsumbavhuyo* and *Youth to the Future* provides young people with a sense of direction and an ambition to change the way they think about their lives and careers. It inspires by illustrating how limitations can be overcome, and entrepreneurship can be embraced as the key to success. One of the listeners indicated that:

Youth to the Future gives ideas to the young and upcoming business owners and guides them in terms of funding (P5, FGD3).

In addition to this comment, *Musina FM* staff also shared the same sentiment which reflect that *Youth to the Future* and *Tsumbavhuyo* do indeed assist young people in shifting their perspective, particularly regarding both social and economic empowerment. According to this employee,

Youth to the future aims to empower youth because we invite different guest in the show, they empower youth through guiding them on how to become businesspeople and how to register business and access funding and Tsumbavhuyo helps with motivations and aspirations to keep young people hopeful (R8, SSI8).

Through these programmes young people are able to acquire skills and knowledge that they can use to improve their own lives. This shows how the youth are urged to see the bigger picture rather than get stuck in the problems at hand. Such programming has nurtured an entrepreneurial spirit, which is especially useful for people in rural areas where employment is normally hard to find. This is in line with the arguments by Sholikhah (2020), who noted that community media plays a key role in encouraging self-reliance and economic aspirations among rural youths.

Through motivational sessions, young listeners are exposed to issues like business establishment, funding and setting realistic goals. The focus on self-sufficiency and alternate economic forms at the community level motivates young people to have hope for their future. Most participants indicated that, that the above quoted programmes are life changing as they feel motivated to follow their aspirations. Thus, *Musina FM's* programming adheres to the realities of rural communities, ensuring that the target audience can easily access the content. Hence, most of young people in the community do change their mindsets as well as their behaviour by actively seeking various types of skills or going for final business applications. The station does this by linking them with success stories and local heroes, creating hope and a sense of possibility. This reflects the empowerment theory which advocates for using readily available resources for social change.

The perspectives of young people illustrate that *Musina FM* programmes provide a direction on how the financial and other barriers associated with rural business can be well executed. In the end, this cultural practice gushes forth youth ambition, encouraging them to consider the future growth of the communities they reside in and progress economically, contributing to such growth. This illustrate that the information received from *Musina FM* assist young people to practically execute and process information for their empowerment.

5.5 Barriers to effective youth empowerment

As emerged from the data, *Musina FM* have programmes that are aimed at youth empowerment. These programmes, according to focus group participants, are able to assist young people with economic and social empowerment. This has been emphasised by *Musina FM* employees whom majority of them through semi-structured interviews stated that, programmes such as *Youth to*

the Future, *Tsumbavhuyo*, *Mulisa wa ndele* and *Tshidziki tsha Mafhungo* helps young people to overcome their life challenges while encouraging them to be self-empowered through business skills. However, the literature, Sithole (2019) and Bosch (2014) highlighted that many community radio programmes tend to imitate commercial radios, for advertising purposes. Additionally, challenges such as lack of governmental support infrastructure limitations, logistical constraints and perceived relevance of content which hinder the stations full effect to empowerment. These subthemes emerged from data and are presented and discussed below. This is to answer one of the study objectives which is: To identify the barriers to effective youth empowerment in Musina rural areas.

5.5.1. Lack of government support

As a theory based on participation as a process, empowerment highlights how crucial it is for communities to collaborate, communicate, and be empowered by the media, particularly community-based media such as community radio (Servaes & Malikhao, 2007; White, 2003). The literature also supports this notion stating that, Community radio especially in rural areas relies on collaboration, bringing together community leaders, NPOs, Government and youth agencies with young people to collectively achieve empowerment. This indicate that collaboration as one of the tents of participation is essential for community radio such as *Musina FM* to achieve youth empowerment.

The findings of the study shows that the support deficit from government institutions is a major obstacle to *Musina FM*'s vision and mandate towards youth empowerment in Musina rural areas. It hampers the ability of the station to mobilise resources and actively participate in issues that affect the youth living in rural regions. From both focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews, the participants raised concerns over the lack of government support, which they consider to be of significant in the formulation of effective youth-oriented programmes. For example, an employee at *Musina FM* emphasised that,

It is not easy to full empower people because other stakeholders, especially local government, do not have time to come to the station even if we give them the opportunity (R5, SSI5).

This feeling is corroborated by the structural problems of *Musina FM* when it deals with the government for youth-oriented programmes, and it does not give the station the power to instigate change on a wider basis. However, this level of government participation has severe

repercussions as it limits the all-important engagement of the youth through economic and educational initiatives. As stated by *Musina FM* employees,

We host a lot of events which we attend but only to find out that the local government received the information, but they do not show up regardless of the invitation, I even went them to beg them but they did not show up so there is not really engagement between the municipality and the youth through the radio (R8, SS18).

In addition, during focus group discussions one of the participants indicated that lack of government support is affecting the effectiveness of community radio to empower them because,

The Municipality only uses the radio when they want to promote their own events, but they hardly come to the radio to address issues that are related to young people even if us as young people we invite them (P6, FGD4).

These comments naturally raise the question of why the station is unable to carry out more ambitious projects, thus, because it simply has no local government support. Community radio stations often rely on partnerships with public entities to offer resources and expertise, resulting in a more comprehensive response to the systemic challenges faced by young people, particularly unemployment and lack of educational avenues. This is in line with empowerment theory which put its emphasis on collaboration of various stakeholders in working together to achieve a common goal.

In this instance, participation emphasises that government institutions have an important role in facilitating dialogue and mobilisation, which, in the end, can make a worthwhile social change (Cadiz, 2015). In this regard, the lack of government commitment not only constrains *Musina FM*'s effectiveness but also prevents the wider community from accessing crucial information and services that can foster youth empowerment. This was pointed out by *Musina FM* employees that enhancing engagement with local governments may lessen some of these constraints, which reinforces the need for more robust governmental support for community radio initiatives that are youth oriented. In addition, promoting joint activities with the institutions, local authorities and NGOs may expand the audience of *Musina FM* and improve its programming possibilities, thus creating a better climate for youth empowerment programmes in the Musina area.

5.5.2. Infrastructure limitations

The study demonstrates that infrastructural constraints limit *Musina FM* from attracting and winning over the young audience in rural areas. The audience is rather constrained due to the

station's poor frequency and lack of infrastructure, with rural youth not being able to participate in the programmes as intended. This obstacle makes it impossible for a large portion of the target segment to benefit from *Musina FM* programmes, where the focus is basically to sensitise the community and mobilise them in the station's active programmes. As emphasised by one of *Musina FM* employees,

Some of the rural young audiences do not enjoy listening to coverage of the station because we can only broadcast in 60KM radius; therefore, our strategy is meeting and broadcasting outside If we can reach all areas within Musina, which is quite logistical (R 7, SSI7).

This shows the need to ensure that there is programming that is meant to raise critical strategic investments required for these infrastructural problems. Upgrading the technologies and increasing the coverage area of the frequency of the station would enhance the access of the people and thus widen the scope of *Musina FM*. Improvement of infrastructure would also ensure that relevant information would be accessed, which would increase the chances of the station succeeding in advocating for social and economic development especially in rural areas. This reinforces the claim by Makhura (2023), who noted that there is a pressing need for closing the infrastructural gap at local community radio stations if they are to function in their capacities to meet their objectives, especially in rural areas where there are few alternatives to the media.

5.5.3. Low youth awareness and engagement

The study findings show that a lack of youth awareness and engagement is one of the major barriers to youth empowerment. From focus group discussions (FGDs), it emerged that there is a lack of awareness and willingness among youth to participate in radio programmes. Youths viewed radio programming as an archaic information channel relative to more modern technologies. This emphasised the point made by Molale (2017) who posit that, empowerment without involving concerned people cannot be regarded as empowerment since people should act as equals in the development initiatives that seek to improve their lives. The low youth engagement maybe caused by lack of involvement in creating radio programmes and content. While the findings show the potential of *Musina FM*'s ability to empower the youth in a number of ways as a platform, many young people do not appreciate this channel for educational purposes, career guidance, or community service. Despite these views, one of the employees of *Musina FM* said that youth involvement is minimal in critical meetings and events.

Youths do not really show up in the Annual General Meeting, so it becomes hard to solicit their opinions on what programmes to run as they do not seem to be interested (R3, SSI3).

This shows that *Musina FM*, being a community radio station, predominantly has the upper hand in providing information for free. Which meets the people's needs, in this case, those in the villages where the affordability of data for other media is out of reach or availability is limited due to poor internet coverage. This corroborates the arguments by Dutta and Ray (2017), who argue that radio stations must create social change, and the government must see it as relevant in their day-to-day activities. This calls for an outreach initiative to inform constituents about the station and how it can contribute to the community. In the absence of this knowledge, the youth are unlikely to look at *Musina FM* as a useful tool for self-empowerment and self-growth.

In order to address this disparity, approachable *Musina FM* engagement strategies geared towards the youth could work. This involves the use of modern social media such as TikTok and WhatsApp for active participants. The use of such platforms would enable *Musina FM* to give the youth an easily accessible entry to its programmes. For instance, one of the focus group discussions suggested that there is a need to be more active on social media. During focus group discussions one of the participants said,

I interact with the radio through the Page Tikhub and comment through this page, even though the station does not respond most of the time (P5, FGD 1).

This response demonstrates the ability to boost message relevance and accessibility using digital sites. Additionally, *Musina* should partner with schools, youth groups, and other community stakeholders to reach out to people through campaigns that show how community radio works to their advantage. As the literature by Nkosi (2023) has indicated, working in association with schools would enhance the image of radio so that the youth who see it as a primitive form of communication would still be interested. This approach is consistent with communication principles whereby the audiences are invited to interact and not merely to listen to the radio.

5.5.4. Perceived relevance of content

The findings of the study also reveals that one of the barriers that is inhibiting *Musina FM*'s ability to empower rural youth is the perceived relevance of the content. Many rural youths complained that the programming missed some of their concerns, such as employment issues and skill development, education and career guidance and thus, they became alienated from the station. Such irrelevance of the content negates the prospect of engaging youth around *Musina*'s rural

areas, especially where social circumstances include lack of employment and economic turbulence. In this instance, empowerment theory calls for a bottom-up approach. As pointed out in Gumucio-Dagron and Tufte (2006) a bottom-up approach underscores the locality, self-representation and active participation, allowing people to take control of their challenges and shape their future. McKee (2016) opined that this approach promotes a democratic process where people collectively take decision as equals. Young people also call for total inclusion and representation in the programmes, saying that,

There is no proper representation of rural youths on the radio due to the fact that the radio fails to highlight common challenges that young people in villages face on a daily basis, and connection to the programs becomes an issue (P3, FGD5).

This worry agrees with other issues within participation as a means of empowerment, especially with regard to community media, which focuses on the target audience in content creation. According to Cadiz (2015), community radio is effective only if it resonates with a given audience and this calls for a concerted effort to understand the socio-economic circumstances of such an audience. In programming for *Musina FM*, there is also a need to address some of the problems facing the youth with respect to entertainment, life skills, vocational education, or any type of problem-solving that can engage the youth in the community.

The responses from the *Musina FM* listeners point to a particular direction in programme development, which is that the participation of the youth is desirable in a bid to have relevant programmes. One of the participants had this to say,

Young people in rural areas must form part of the programmes either as presenters or produce their content, so that radio can help them because, to be honest, radio is not helping young people in rural areas (P6, FGD4).

This feeling reinforces the continued participatory approaches; in this case, the relevance of the content becomes enhanced, and the gap for the youth is bridged to raise pertinent issues that they want to address and provide answers collectively. *Musina FM* needs to ensure that young people are involved in programme development and content creation. This according to Melkote and Steeves (2015) would foster collaboration among individuals to solve issues and collectively make decisions utilising platforms such as community radio where young people voice their opinions and interact with leaders' to actively engage in empowerment process.

5.5.5 Logistical constraints in community participation

Furthermore, the study found that the logistical constraints in community participation in *Musina FM* promotion remain a challenge or problem in youth engagement and empowerment. Using youth in road shows or other face-to-face community activities is key in transformative youth programming. However, due to infrastructural development challenges and limited frequency coverage, *Musina FM* has difficulties in attempting to reach more sparse rural regions in such regions; physical contacts may be able to strengthen the station's penetration and bolster youth participation for empowerment. Several youths, particularly in rural Musina, find it difficult to obtain the content of the station due to such logistical factors. In the semi structured interview discussion, one of the employees mentions that,

The youth in rural areas do not have full access to the station, so if we can go to the youth and have an outside broadcast and cover all the areas in Musina even though it comes with logistical challenges (R2, SSI2).

These limitations of *Musina FM* have impacted the broader structural deficiencies prevalent among community radio stations, especially for those situated in rural areas. According to Bessette (2004), community radio, as postulated from the participation as a process of empowerment perspective, has an important function of providing complementary information and engagement in activities for the disadvantaged in society. It is clear that without enough infrastructure to support consistent outreach and appropriate broadcasts that would cover the intended areas on a regular basis, there is little impact that *Musina FM* can have in the wider youth empowerment context.

Participants suggested that in order to overcome these logistical issues, *Musina FM* could seek to work collaboratively with local government and community non-profit organisations to develop robust outreach programmes. Such partnerships could also offer logistical assistance and shared facilities, enabling the station to retain a wider geographical audience in areas that are currently unserved due to a lack of infrastructure. Hence the literature calls for collaboration for improving people's lives.

5.6 Strategies for youth empowerment

Based on the findings and the thematic and the lens of empowerment theory analysis of data in the previous themes, data indicate that *Musina FM* do have programmes that are aimed at social and economic empowerment of young people in rural areas. Participants often mentioned

programmes such as *Youth to the Future*, *Mulisa wa ndele*, *Tshidziki tsha Mafhungo* and *Areaganeng* amongst others. However, data further reveal that there are some uncertainties about how effective their programmes in are engaging and involving young people in programmes development and content creation. It is evident that obstacles such as lack of government assistance and logistical limitations are hindering *Musina FMs* efforts to effectively empower the youth living in rural Musina. Based on the findings and discussions presented here, it is evident that in order to promote social and economic empowerment in rural areas in Musina, *Musina FM* will need to implement strategies aimed at fostering youth empowerment in rural areas. But how can these strategies ensure more sustainable and inclusive youth participation in the station's activities? The theme of strategies emerged during the analysis of data. This theme is discussed below through its subthemes, this is to answer the following research objective: To determine the strategies that Musina FM can employ to improve youth empowerment in Musina rural areas.

5.6.1 Enhanced youth participation in programming

The study findings show that an essential strategy for youth empowerment in Musina rural areas through *Musina FM* involves enhancing youth participation in programming. This approach is widely advocated as a means of ensuring that the content aligns with youth interests and lived experiences. Engaging young people directly in the production and planning processes fosters a participatory culture within the station, giving young people ownership of their narratives and providing a platform for them to express their voices. As one respondent remarked,

The radio must have a programme that is produced by the youth for the youth so that they feel involved (R1, SSI).

This response reflects the participation as a main principle of empowerment theory where marginalised groups are encouraged to take active roles in creating initiatives that serve their own development. This finding corroborates the findings of Cadiz (2015), who argues that participation is important in enabling marginalised voices to be both creators and subjects of media content. Thus, involving young people in programmes development and content creation, *Musina FM* aligns with Carpentier's (2018) participation, which emphasises horizontal communication where audiences are active participants rather than passive recipients of the information which concerns their wellbeing. This approach aligns with Carpentier's (2018) framework by empowering young people to shape discussions and choose topics that resonate with them, thereby enhancing their engagement and sense of community.

The benefits of youth-driven programming were also underscored in focus group discussions. One participant expressed that,

We must be given the opportunity to contribute to their programmes, and they should also listen to us because community radio is there to help us (P3, FGD1).

In addition, another young person from focus group discussion shared that,

Young people must be part of the planning of the programme in Musina FM so that it reflects their needs, and this will help to empower them (P2, FGD2).

This comment resonates with the views of participant 4 from focus group discussion 3. According to this participant, *Musina FM*,

Must consult with the youth when they start the programmes because sometimes you find that what they are addressing is not that important to the young people. So, the radio must go to young people and ask them of what they want then to change their programmes according or based on what young people are demanding or facing (P4, FGD3).

These statements highlight the importance of youth engagement and participation through dialogue in *Musina FM* not only in engaging in the content but also to co-create programmes which are essential for youth empowerment. This aligns with empowerment theory which advocates that community members must be engaged meaningfully in the development process that concern their lives. By allowing youth to guide content creation and programmes development, *Musina FM* can address underrepresented or misrepresented issues, such as mental health, education, drug abuse and unemployment, which are often covered by the mainstream media but lacks local relevant.

Data from semi-structured interviews indicate that the employees at *Musina FM* are aware that radio should serve the community and this calls for inclusion in actively participate in the production of radio content. This according to respondent 5 can only be achieved if the radio,

Can go outside and open a platform for young people to become part of the process since AGM seems to be failing. We must not only invite young people in studio to participate in our programmes, but we must also get their input, or we do the survey and compile what they want, and we can amend our programmes as such based on the wishes of young people in Musina rural areas (R5, SSI5).

Parallel to the above view, respondent 8 also shared that,

Musina FM should form partnership with the young people in rural areas and Musina as a whole so that they bring their own ideas and perspectives regarding the programming and content because sometimes we don't cover all issues and that can be a challenge sometimes (R8, SS18).

These comments emphasise the need for allowing youth involvement in programme production which provides an avenue for deeper discussions on crucial topics, empowering young people to frame these discussions from their perspectives. Scholars like Banda (2021) note that this model fosters skill development and practical experience in media, equipping young people with journalism, broadcasting, and media production skills. These skills not only enhance immediate programming but also contribute to long-term career and personal growth. The empowerment theory requires the involvement of young people not only in production of the programmes but also in the development of programmes and creation of content which is community based and locally representing the needs and perspectives of young people in Musina. These experiences depicts that the essence of empowerment where young people are to take leadership roles in their communities to take control of their own lives.

5.6.2 Community-based content and local relevance

The study's findings highlight the need for 'community content' that addresses the particular needs and problems of rural youth with regard to unemployment and the acquisition of skills. Reportedly, *Musina FM* needs to increase its audience's participation by involving them in programmes development and addressing issues such as drug abuse, psychological problems, and career development, which are integral parts of the rural youth's experience. Young people had sufficient understanding of their challenges and needs therefore called for content that they believed met the needs, as seen in the focus group discussion data. For example, one focus group participant stated that,

Most of the programmes in the radio does not talk to young people in Musina rural because they focus too much on regional and international issues, it will be better if the radio focus more on the issues that are youth related in Musina (P4, FGD1).

This comment underscores the need for *Musina FM* to focus on content that is locally relevant and resonate with the community they serve particularly young people. According to the literature, ICASA (2020) advocates that community radio programmes should reflect the community they

serve by having at least 60% locally focused programmes. Hence community-based content has the potential to empower young people in rural areas. The empowerment theory is also centred in local based knowledge to be used for improving young people's lives. Hence, Nkosi (2023) opined that community radio programming emphasizes the centrality of cultural identity, arguing that a station running content that mirrors and magnifies local culture enhances levels of interest and participation. As indicated below by participant 1 in focus group discussion 3,

The radio must cover issues related to education more, especially for the youth living in rural Musina. That is why most of the youth in these areas are not informed of what needs to be done for them to study further (P1, FGD3).

This recommendation indicates the need for *Musina FM* to include educational content in order to assist young people to realise their career in Musina. This aligns with the ideals of the empowerment theory, which advocates for media content that is relevant to the people and their needs. As argued by scholars like Fraser and Estrada (2001), community radio must meet the social and economic situations of its beneficiaries, which for Musina rural areas, these needs cover high youth unemployment and poor availability of educational facilities. The findings, therefore, support the concept that the local relevance of content can create productive audience engagement that avails deeper social integration within the community.

From the perspective of *Musina FM*, the staff also indicated that programmes and issues which focus on youth have an important aspect in the fight against common forms of social injustice such as drug abuse. In this regard, the radio focuses on younger audiences' issues, which are frequently ignored by mainstream media. These include well-prepared discussions, interviews, and expert opinions provided by *Musina FM*, which informs the public about the dangers of substance use, as well as extinguishers of hope, easy access, and community resources for recovery. As pointed out by respondent 6 during semi-structured interviews,

In Musina we face challenges such as drug abuse and youth unemployment. so from time to time we have programmes that we run outside the studio to engage with the youth, so we also do that even through our shows, we invite professionals who have answers to the challenges that are facing people in our areas. These people engage with the youth through our radio (R6, SSI6).

This kind of strategy not only addressing pressing issues in Musina rural but also informs young people and stimulates the youth to act in solidarity and firmness in order to make better decisions which is the essence of empowerment. Likewise, the radio supports youth subculture in its activist

strand by promoting the principle of openly discussing substance use, which serves to destigmatise the problems and allows youth to discuss such issues without worrying about repercussions. One of the employees of *Musina FM* also explained that:

Musina FM programming covers issues such as drug abuse, especially alcohol in rural areas because most of our youth are focusing on alcohol through inviting youth and relevant stakeholders to come together and share experiences on issues such as crime and drug abuse (R3, SSI3).

However young people feel that although *Musina FM* address issues such as drug abuse and other social ills haunting young people in Musina, these issues are not well covered, one of the participants from focus group discussion expressed that,

Issue related to drug abuse and alcohol abuse should be covered more since most young people here have given themselves into alcohol and drugs due to depression and other mental illness since they do not work (P3, FGD3).

This comment suggest that *Musina FM* should include young people in content creation since they are the ones who knows and understand their challenges. Empowerment theory also supports this notion as pointed out in Molale (2019), who posits that beneficiaries of change should be allowed to actively identify issues, develop mechanism to address such issues. Issues of drug abuse demonstrate to be a pressing issue which the radio do try to address but young people contend that these issues need special attention. By targeting this locally designed programming, *Musina FM* not only addresses the challenges faced by youth in rural areas but also opens avenues for communication and assistance. This is consistent with the findings of research done earlier by Mdawe (2014), who observed that community radio can serve as an important tool for transmitting social and health messages, which are vital for the efforts of rural mobilisation. However, rural mobilisation might not be easy since reaching young people in rural areas seem to be difficult, hence data revealed that to enhance youth empowerment, community radio should consider using digital platforms for a wider reach.

5.6.3 Radio convergence for wider reach

Considering the emergency of new media, the study findings also revealed that young people prefer new media rather than using traditional channels of communication. Therefore, the use of digital platforms for wider reach remains another strategy that *Musina FM* can adopt for youth empowerment. The participants regarded platforms such as TikTok and WhatsApp as being

crucial in terms of accessing content in a manner that suits their media habits. Such changes represent one of the principles of empowerment theory, which seek to promote and democratise communication channels that are relevant to the local audiences and allow the audiences to interact actively and openly (Dialogue) as opposed to passively absorbing content. From the focus group discussions, most participants had recurring sentiments that support this. One of the participants illuminated that:

I participate through social media and commenting especially on TikTok during the broadcast (P5, FGD5).

The above statement indicates the significant shift from traditional broadcast to Modern radio convergence which accommodates younger generation in participating in community radio initiatives. To indicate the significance of digital platforms for wider reach and engagement, *Musina FM* employees suggested that,

As a community radio, we must be offered free data website so that young people in Musina can access radio easily. This will help the youth in rural areas as well since there will be free access to radio (R3, SS13).

We are trying to figure out what we can do so that we make sure that they engage, but we also engage them through WhatsApp groups and other social media platforms (R2, SS1).

These comments illustrate that the combination social media platforms and traditional broadcasting has created opportunities for the station's audiences to engage the young listeners in a more interactive manner, providing instant feedback and engagement during the broadcast. Such two-way communication is more engaging and is likely to elicit more favourable responses from the listeners. Data indicate that *Musina FM* utilise radio convergence opportunity which incorporate traditional radio broadcasting and social media to create and enabling young people active participation in the broadcasts and prove to them that their voices matter.

Even though there is consensus regarding the utilisation of digital platforms for active engagement and fostering youth empowerment, data also indicated that, digital platforms may exclude other segment of youth population since they face challenges such as access to data. This calls for radio not to neglect other conventional methods of engaging with youth as indicated by one of *Musina FM* employees who believes that,

The radio need more of roadshow so that it can improve in terms of the youth engagement because outside broadcasting attract the youth, it is easier that way

because if you check place like Malale, they cannot come here but if we take Musina FM to Malale, they will be able to come to the Radio. We can also use our social media platform such as Facebook, we already have these groups, we also have WhatsApp group to connect with those who do not come to our road shows (R4, SSI4).

The above comment confirms that *Musina FM* is already engaging with rural youth through converging both traditional roadshows and new media. This is important since young people also expressed that, in rural areas it is difficult to connect with the radio as indicated by focus group participant who mentioned that,

Musina FM must make sure they come to young people more because in rural it is so difficult to get hold the radio and as a result, we are unable to have instances where radio help us but if they come more often, it will be easy for them to help us (P3, FGD5).

In light to the above comment, one of *Musina FM* employee also indicated that,

The radio can increase participation through extending our frequency because our frequency does not reach other areas especially in other areas. When we do roadshows, we see the great attendance, but we do not have a reach in these areas. Maybe we must use more of our social media platforms together with radio to reach young people in these areas (R2, SSI2).

The above comments highlight the importance of recognising conventional methods of engagement but also recognise digital platforms to enhance active youth engagement particularly in rural areas where radio frequency find it difficult to reach.

The study findings further established that digital platforms not only increase accessibility but also appeal to the technological nature of young people, which is crucial in promoting feelings of ownership and participation as studies by Fairbairn and Shah (2017) indicated that the move to the new technological formats through community radio can function as an intermediary between the traditional and modern ways of interaction with the young population, this is also in line with participation which advocates for decolonisation of communication for empowerment. In this regard, *Musina FM*, through this integrated approach has the ability to become a participation avenue where the young population voices and opinions can be heard, respected and embraced since they are beneficiaries of change. Such communication action would require resources, and the new generation might consider further investment in these new media in order to close the challenges caused by limited broadcasting signals in rural areas.

5.6.4 Focus on educational and career guidance

The findings from the study show that education and career guidance stand out as key to empowering youth through community radio, especially in resource-poor regions. Most of the participants expressed concerns that there are insufficient educational programmes and guides for youth who can help them build their future. One of the participants from focus group discussions pointed out that:

There is a need for programmes that address school and career topics, to motivate youth to pursue their education and improve their career prospects (P4, FGD1)

This statement calls attention to the importance of initiatives that not only provide concrete short-term solutions but also encourage youth to think beyond a single target and have a sense of aspiration and direction.

The significance of this approach is also supported by empowerment which focus on the provision of relevant resources that are not only simple but also originate from the community. Hence the concept of asset-based community approach which centred in local resources to empower the community. When community radio is put to good use, it offers the immediacy of showing programmes, such as ethnic and cultural content, that the audience is interested in. Such programmes such as career counselling, entrepreneurship and education information can position *Musina FM* as a link to info that is relevant to the development of young people. Bessette (2004) argues that the use of local media, which contains pertinent information, facilitates better choices and growth among poorer communities.

Further, these findings are consistent with previous studies on youth empowerment and theory with the emphasis of authors like Zimmerman (2000), who dealt with the management of adequate resources meant to help youth move through important life changes. Further, Chawla and Cushing (2007) emphasise that real opportunities and information such as educational and career information are fundamental in building the confidence of young people to pursue their prospects. Therefore, the overall vision of this *Musina FM* may integrate this participatory perspective and transform the station from being just a broadcasting facility to address the need for career guidance, which is often absent in rural areas. Such initiatives are also linked with the findings of Machel (1996), who demonstrated that youth who were empowered were less likely to indulge in risk-taking behaviours as they had a clearer vision of positive contribution to society. This change is in line with the views of Fraser and Restrepo-Estrada (2001), who maintained that

community radio is a powerful medium that has the dual role of providing the necessary information and nurturing individuals, especially in poor settings.

Thus, educational and career-oriented projects on community radio can enable the youth to make better use of their potential and contribute to society in a more meaningful way. They do not only respond to immediate concerns about education and jobs but also contribute to the fostering of a culture of self-initiative and lifelong strategies for learning, which are crucial for the youth's sustenance and the overall advancement of the community. However, it is difficult for the radio, especially community radio to achieve this. Hence collaboration with local stakeholders would assist *Musina FM* to effectively empower young people in Musina.

5.6.5 Collaborations with local government and NGOs

Since community radio programmes, whose purpose is to be used as agents of change, it should provide a space for dialogue and participation between various stakeholders such as local government, youth empowerment agencies and NGOs to deliberate on issues affecting community development, particularly concerning youth empowerment. The study findings demonstrate that there is lack of support from local organisations despite the fact that partnerships with governmental agencies, NGOs, and private sector organisations are vital for enhancing *Musina FM's* youth empowerment efforts. As indicate during semi-structured interviews with the employees,

As the radio, we must have a good communication between the government other organisations and the radio so that they can get the slots and communicate with the youth. It must start from the relationship so that they are able to come and talk to youth (R6, SSI6).

Most employees at *Musina FM* pointed to this relationship as a much-needed vehicle to empower young people living in rural Musina. These partnerships not only increase the station's access to resources but also broaden the impact of its programmes by tackling economic and social issues from multiple angles. In line with the empowerment theory, which underscores the importance of collaborative and inclusive media for social change, *Musina FM's* role as a bridge between government and the community is essential in ensuring that young people are empowered.

Through regular engagement with stakeholders, the station can ensure that its programming aligns with and amplifies the support provided by these organisations. For instance, Moyo (2021) highlights the role of community radio in promoting social justice, emphasising the value of

partnerships that hold governments accountable and provide marginalised groups with representation. However, although the theory highlights the significance of collaborative effort between community radio and Government, data from both focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews highlights a lack of consistent governmental support as a recurring obstacle, with one *Musina FM* employee saying that,

When it comes to issues of collaborations, it is not easy because other stakeholders especially local government, they do not have time to come to the station even if we give them opportunity. The municipality does not engage with the radio at all. It is difficult because the municipality chooses to use regional and national radio instead of using the local radio, so it is very difficult. There is no good relationship between the radio and the municipality (R5, SS15).

Another employee shared the same view indicating that,

We do have the platform, and we call them to account, but the local government does not honour our invitation. We call the departments to come and assist the youth or talk to the youth. The challenge is that the municipality is not coming to the part since there was infighting, but we are now trying to revive that relationship (R8, SS18).

These sentiments reflect broader challenges faced by community radio stations in securing active engagement from institutional stakeholders such as Local Government. Without government and NGO partnerships, *Musina FM*'s efforts to create relevant and impactful empowerment through its programming may be hindered. The lack of engagement from authorities thus limits the depth of youth-centred discussions on critical issues like unemployment, healthcare, and education, which are central to *Musina FM*'s mission.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the study findings responding to the question: how community radio programmes facilitate youth social and economic empowerment in rural areas of Musina. The findings suggest that the station provided essential information, educational resources, and platforms for addressing local issues, with programmes like *Youth to the Future* fostering youth engagement. However, the impact was constrained by factors such as short broadcast times, reliance on digital platforms, and infrastructural challenges such as poor internet connectivity. Another key finding is the limited involvement of youth in programme development. The radio station may want to consider aligning its content with the needs of local youth by extending broadcast hours and integrating online media platforms to enhance accessibility and youth

participation. Greater youth involvement and collaboration with local stakeholders will strengthen the station's impact. Empowerment theory demonstrated how community radio programmes could drive meaningful social and economic development. The next chapter will summarise the study, present conclusions, and offer recommendations.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This study set out to explore the role of community radio programmes in promoting youth empowerment in rural areas, with a specific focus on *Musina FM*. The research employed thematic analysis, complemented by an examination through the lens of participatory communication, to ensure that the research questions outlined in this study were comprehensively addressed. While the previous chapter presented and discussed the findings in detail, this chapter provides a summary of the study's key conclusions and offers recommendations targeted at *Musina FM* and broader youth empowerment initiatives. It also highlights potential areas for future research to advance knowledge on youth empowerment strategies in rural contexts.

Based on the findings presented and discussed in the preceding chapter, the following conclusions were drawn:

- *Musina FM*'s youth empowerment programmes are not merely supplementary initiatives but serve as critical mechanisms for fostering significant socio-economic and personal growth among rural youth in Musina.
- *Musina FM* effectively promotes youth engagement and active participation in its programmes aimed at community development.
- Rural youth respond positively to *Musina FM*'s programmes and derive tangible benefits in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that contribute to their empowerment.

That *Musina FM* provides a platform for engagement, knowledge dissemination, and active participation is a demonstration of the potential of community radio to address the socio-economic challenges faced by rural youth. However, structural and financial barriers continue to limit the station's ability to fully realise its mandate. These findings not only contribute to the broader understanding of the role of community radio in rural contexts but also emphasize the importance of tailoring programmes to align with the specific needs and aspirations of young people. The following sections provide a detailed summary of the study's key findings, offer some recommendations for *Musina FM*, and suggest areas for future research to deepen the understanding of youth empowerment strategies in rural areas.

6.2. Summary of findings

The findings are summarised below under four key themes presented in the last chapter namely youth empowerment programmes, youth engagement and participation, barriers to effective communication, and strategies for youth empowerment. Collectively, the findings reveal that *Musina FM*'s programmes serve as more than supplementary community initiatives; they are vital mechanisms for fostering socio-economic and personal growth among rural youth. The study found that *Musina FM* plays a significant role in promoting active youth engagement and participation by providing platforms for self-expression and skill development. Furthermore, rural youth respond positively to the station's programming, benefiting in ways that enhance their knowledge, skills, and overall empowerment. The following sections address each of these themes in turn beginning with:

6.2.1. Youth Empowerment Programmes

The findings of this study underscore the pivotal role of *Musina FM* in promoting socio-economic empowerment among rural youth in Musina, reflecting a synergy between Zimmerman's Empowerment Theory (2000) and participatory communication principles as articulated by Freire (1970). Empowerment, in this context, is understood as a socio-economic process that enhances the capacity of individuals to gain control over their lives by accessing resources, developing skills, and participating in decision-making processes that influence their environment (Zimmerman, 2000; Rappaport, 1987). *Musina FM*'s community-centred programming exemplifies this approach by positioning itself not only as a provider of information but also as a facilitator of participatory processes that drive social and economic transformation.

According to Zimmerman's Empowerment Theory, empowerment occurs across three interrelated dimensions: intrapersonal (self-efficacy, confidence, and sense of control), interactional (the ability to navigate and influence social systems), and behavioural (actions taken to achieve desired outcomes). *Musina FM* operationalises these dimensions through its socio-economically focused programmes, such as *Youth to the Future*, which provide young people with critical knowledge and skills in entrepreneurship, financial literacy, and job readiness. These programmes address the intrapersonal dimension by boosting young people's confidence in their ability to participate in and influence their socio-economic realities. Meanwhile, programmes like *Tshidziki Tsha Mafhungo*, *Tsumbavhuyo*, and *Mulisa Wandele* provide platforms for youth to engage with issues such as poverty, drug abuse, crime, and civic participation, fostering the interactional dimension by enabling them to navigate community structures and access resources.

Musina FM's programming also reflects Freire's (1970) conceptualisation of participatory communication as both a means and a process of empowerment. Freire argues that dialogue, mutual learning, and critical consciousness are essential for enabling marginalised individuals to take control of their lives and challenge oppressive structures. *Musina FM* embodies this approach by creating spaces for youth to participate in discussions about their socio-economic challenges and co-produce solutions. For example, *Tshidziki Tsha Mafhungo* encourages dialogue on pressing community issues, allowing youth to critically reflect on their circumstances, voice their perspectives, and contribute to community decision-making. This participatory model enables socio-economic empowerment by fostering not only awareness but also the practical knowledge and collective action necessary to achieve long-term change (Freire, 1970; Waisbord, 2008).

Through these participatory processes, *Musina FM* contributes to the behavioural dimension of empowerment by equipping youth with the tools to take deliberate socio-economic action. For example, entrepreneurial training offered through *Youth to the Future* empowers young listeners to pursue self-employment opportunities, thereby reducing their dependency on external economic systems. Similarly, programmes addressing financial literacy and job readiness provide practical skills that enable behavioural change, transforming passive recipients of information into active agents of their own socio-economic development. This aligns with Waisbord's (2008) view that participatory communication fosters agency by enabling individuals to actively shape their futures, rather than passively consuming messages.

At the community level, *Musina FM* also cultivates social capital, a critical component of socio-economic empowerment as highlighted by Carpentier (2018). By creating platforms for dialogue and networking, the station enables young listeners to build connections that can be mobilised to address shared socio-economic challenges. These networks foster collective efficacy, a core aspect of Zimmerman's interactional empowerment, as youth collaborate to tackle issues such as unemployment, crime, and access to resources. For example, the participatory nature of *Tsumbavhuyo* not only strengthens the youth's capacity to engage in problem-solving but also enhances their sense of belonging and agency within the broader community. This resonates with Carpentier's (2018) emphasis on participatory processes as a means of strengthening marginalised communities' capacity to identify and address their challenges.

Furthermore, *Musina FM*'s programmes bridge the immediate and structural aspects of socio-economic empowerment. While addressing urgent challenges such as unemployment, poverty, and drug abuse, these programmes also build the long-term capacities necessary for sustained empowerment, including leadership, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. Rappaport

(1987) emphasises that empowerment must be understood as both a process and an outcome, with the process involving participatory mechanisms that lead to enduring transformation. In this regard, *Musina FM*'s integration of participatory programming demonstrates its role as both a catalyst for immediate socio-economic relief and a driver of long-term structural change.

The findings also highlight the need to reinforce and expand *Musina FM*'s youth-centric programming to overcome persistent structural barriers. For example, challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, limited funding, and unreliable connectivity constrain the station's ability to fully implement participatory mechanisms. Addressing these barriers would amplify *Musina FM*'s capacity to deliver on its mandate of socio-economic empowerment. As Waisbord (2008) notes, participatory communication initiatives require sustained institutional support to achieve their transformative potential. Similarly, Carpentier (2018) underscores the importance of inclusive and well-resourced participatory frameworks to ensure meaningful engagement and sustained outcomes.

In conclusion, *Musina FM*'s youth empowerment programmes demonstrate the potential of community radio as a transformative tool for socio-economic empowerment. By aligning its programming with the principles of Empowerment Theory and participatory communication, the station fosters agency, builds social capital, and addresses both immediate and structural socio-economic challenges. These findings position *Musina FM* as a model for leveraging community radio to drive participatory and sustainable socio-economic development in rural communities

6.2.2. Youth engagement and participation

The findings of this study reveal that *Musina FM* actively engages its youth listeners through a variety of participatory programmes, which are crucial for fostering socio-economic empowerment. Engagement is facilitated by a participatory communication model that positions young people as active participants rather than passive consumers as posited in Freire's (1970) concept of dialogue as the foundation of empowerment and social transformation. The majority of study participants expressed that *Musina FM* provides opportunities for meaningful engagement, particularly through modern communication technologies, highlighting the convergence of traditional radio with digital platforms. Focus group discussions revealed that the station's youth listeners strongly desire to play an active role in shaping the issues broadcast on *Musina FM*, as they perceive the station to authentically reflect their beliefs, aspirations, and local realities. This sense of relevance and representation fosters a critical sense of community, belonging, and purpose among the youth - key intrapersonal components of empowerment as outlined by Zimmerman (2000).

Musina FM's participatory model enables young people to engage in discussions on a broad spectrum of topics, ranging from local development initiatives to personal and societal challenges. These discussions empower youth with competencies essential for navigating daily life, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making. By creating forums for open dialogue, *Musina FM* advances the principles of participatory communication theory, which views communication as a dialogical process where participants co-construct knowledge and engage collaboratively to address shared concerns (Carpentier, 2018; Freire, 1970). The findings demonstrate that this participatory approach cultivates interactional empowerment, as youth are actively involved in identifying and addressing the socio-economic challenges within their communities. Additionally, the act of engaging directly in decision-making processes fosters a sense of ownership and agency, empowering youth to contribute meaningfully to their development and that of their communities.

However, while *Musina FM* excels in facilitating youth engagement during broadcast discussions, the study identifies a significant gap in youth participation during the creation and development of programmes. Although the station holds an annual general meeting to solicit input on programming, participants reported that youth attendance at these sessions is limited. This absence highlights a missed opportunity to extend participatory communication into the production process, which Freire (1970) and Carpentier (2018) argue is essential for achieving audience-centred democracy and fostering deeper empowerment. Involving young people in programme creation could build vital leadership, organisational, and collaborative skills, contributing not only to socio-economic empowerment but also to the development of future community leaders. Additionally, such involvement aligns with Waisbord's (2008) assertion that participatory communication processes must extend to all stages of media production to maximise their transformative potential.

The study also underscores the critical contribution of *Musina FM*'s educational programming to both personal and professional development among rural youth. Youth participants praised the station's emphasis on career preparation, skill development, health education, and other essential resources typically lacking in rural areas. By filling these informational gaps, *Musina FM* empowers young listeners to make informed decisions, thereby enhancing their intrapersonal empowerment through increased confidence, knowledge, and self-efficacy (Zimmerman, 2000). Furthermore, the station fosters behavioural empowerment by equipping youth with actionable skills and knowledge that they can apply to improve their socio-economic circumstances. For example, educational programmes provide youth with critical tools for entering the workforce, pursuing entrepreneurial opportunities, and making informed

choices about health and well-being. Participants reported that such content not only enabled them to exercise greater control over their lives but also enhanced their capacity to influence their communities positively.

Musina FM also serves as a catalyst for the development of social capital, which Zimmerman (2000) and Carpentier (2018) identify as a cornerstone of community empowerment. By fostering a network of engaged listeners, the station enables youth to build relationships, exchange ideas, and collaboratively address shared challenges. This process strengthens collective efficacy, allowing young people to mobilise resources and take collective action to advance socio-economic development within their communities. For example, interactive programmes such as *Tshidziki Tsha Mafhungo* encourage youth to actively discuss issues such as unemployment, education, and infrastructure, providing a platform for collective problem-solving and participation in local governance. Such interactions contribute to the development of critical capacities, including civic engagement and community leadership, which are vital for long-term empowerment and social transformation.

Despite these strengths, the findings also reveal structural limitations that hinder *Musina FM's* ability to fully realise its participatory and empowerment potential. Notably, the timing of programme broadcasts and the lack of infrastructure in remote areas restrict access for certain segments of the rural population, including youth in areas without reliable electricity or internet connectivity. As Waisbord (2008) emphasises, participatory initiatives must be supported by adequate infrastructure to ensure equitable access and inclusivity. Addressing these structural barriers would enable *Musina FM* to expand its reach and enhance its ability to engage a broader audience, thereby amplifying its impact on socio-economic empowerment. Furthermore, the study highlights the need for increased investment in programme expansion and technological integration to ensure that the participatory communication model remains relevant and responsive to the evolving needs of the community.

Musina FM's interactive programming stands out as an exemplary model for advancing youth-centred perspectives and fostering active engagement in rural communities. Unlike conventional top-down media models, the station's approach reflects the ideals of media democracy by prioritising local relevance, inclusion, and participation. Its transformative programming segments shift the focus from passive information delivery to active co-creation, allowing youth to articulate their concerns, share experiences, and propose solutions. This participatory approach not only strengthens the socio-economic position of rural youth but also contributes to broader social integration and cohesion.

In conclusion, the findings confirm that *Musina FM* significantly promotes youth engagement and participation in ways that align with both Empowerment Theory and participatory communication principles. The station's programmes empower youth by enhancing their capacity to voice concerns, develop critical skills, and take actionable steps to improve their lives and communities. However, the study also identifies areas for improvement, particularly in extending youth participation to the programme creation process and addressing structural barriers to access. By addressing these gaps, *Musina FM* could further cement its role as a transformative force in socio-economic empowerment, ensuring that the next generation of community leaders is equipped with the tools and opportunities needed to drive sustainable development.

6.2.3 Barriers to effective communication

The findings of this study highlight several barriers that constrain *Musina FM's* ability to effectively engage and empower the full spectrum of rural youth, particularly those in remote areas. These barriers are rooted in a combination of infrastructural, financial, and technological constraints, all of which significantly hinder the station's ability to function as an inclusive and equitable platform for socio-economic empowerment. Such limitations expose the phenomenon of "information poverty," wherein disparities in access to communication resources perpetuate socio-economic inequities and undermine the participatory potential of community radio. This aligns with Waisbord's (2008) critique of communication inequalities as barriers to democratic participation and empowerment in marginalised contexts.

Infrastructure limitations emerged as a significant barrier, with *Musina FM* struggling to maintain engagement due to inadequate broadcasting instruments, limited geographical reach, and unstable internet connectivity. The station's broadcast radius is restricted to just 60 km, leaving many rural and remote communities - often the most underserved and in need of empowerment programming - unable to access its content. This geographical limitation constrains the delivery of vital information on civic engagement, employment, education, and health, leaving rural youth in isolated areas unable to benefit from the station's offerings. This aligns with Mabogo's (2015) findings that limited community radio coverage in underprivileged areas exacerbates the exclusion of rural populations from key developmental resources. Zimmerman's interactional empowerment dimension, which emphasises individuals' capacity to access and utilise resources within their environment, is thus significantly constrained for youth in these underserved areas.

Further compounding these challenges is the high cost of mobile data, which prevents many rural youths from accessing *Musina FM's* online services. While radio convergence with digital

platforms offers the potential to broaden the station's reach and engagement, the socio-economic realities of rural Musina hinder the station's ability to fully leverage digital tools. This "digital divide" (Waisbord, 2018) restricts the station's capacity to offer complementary services such as podcasts, interactive social media content, and other digital innovations, which could enhance participation and engagement. Sholikhah (2020) emphasises that community radio's failure to bridge the digital divide perpetuates disparities in communication access, further marginalising rural communities. Consequently, *Musina FM's* ability to achieve behavioural empowerment, which requires individuals to act on resources to effect meaningful change, is constrained by the structural inequalities in access to both radio and digital services.

The station's limited budget emerged as another critical barrier, curtailing its ability to develop new programming or sustain long-term initiatives targeting youth empowerment. Financial constraints restrict the range of activities the station can offer, as well as the consistency and quality of its programming. Without adequate funding, *Musina FM* is unable to scale its operations, hire and train additional staff, or invest in specialised content tailored to the diverse socio-economic needs of its youth audience. Bulani (2022) notes that budgetary limitations are a common challenge for community radio stations, resulting in resource gaps that hinder their capacity to fully engage with marginalised groups. Zimmerman's emphasis on structural barriers to empowerment is reflected here, as *Musina FM's* inability to overcome financial challenges inhibits its ability to equip rural youth with the tools and opportunities necessary to foster socio-economic transformation.

Infrastructure challenges further extend to the station's outdated transmission equipment, which limits its broadcast quality and coverage. Participants in the study identified the need for improved transmission infrastructure to expand the station's reach to remote areas where alternative media resources are equally scarce. Upgrading transmission equipment and expanding the broadcast radius would not only increase *Musina FM's* accessibility but also enhance its inclusivity as a participatory platform. However, such upgrades require substantial capital investment, which the station's current budgetary constraints render unattainable. This limitation reflects Rappaport's (1987) concept of empowerment as both a process and an outcome - without the structural support to facilitate access, the process of empowerment cannot be fully realised, and marginalised communities remain excluded from developmental opportunities.

Another critical challenge lies in the station's digital and network infrastructure. While *Musina FM* has the potential to combine traditional radio with digital media to extend its reach and increase engagement, the lack of consistent internet access across rural Musina inhibits this integration. The absence of robust network infrastructure means that many young people cannot access

digital services that could complement traditional broadcasts, such as interactive social media campaigns or downloadable podcasts. This restriction undermines *Musina FM*'s ability to utilise digital tools as a means of participatory communication, which Freire (1970) and Carpentier (2018) highlight as essential for fostering dialogue and collective action. Participants in the study noted that such tools could enhance the participatory nature of *Musina FM*'s programming, enabling youth to engage more interactively with content while fostering a deeper sense of inclusion and agency.

In addition to infrastructural and technological limitations, the study also found that governmental support for community radio is insufficient, further constraining *Musina FM*'s ability to expand its outreach and programming. Focus group discussions revealed that participants viewed this lack of support as a significant obstacle to the station's sustainability and ability to address systemic challenges faced by rural youth. Wabwire (2018) similarly notes that the lack of institutional support for rural community radio stations exacerbates their vulnerability, leaving them unable to fully operationalise their developmental mandates. For *Musina FM*, this lack of governmental support translates into an inability to scale up its operations, improve its technological framework, or invest in content diversification to address the specific needs of its youth audience.

Overcoming these barriers is critical for *Musina FM* to fulfil its potential as a transformative platform for socio-economic empowerment. Addressing the infrastructural limitations, particularly in transmission and digital connectivity, would enable the station to reach a broader audience and ensure that rural youth in remote areas can access its content. Moreover, increased investment in digital tools and convergence strategies could enhance the station's participatory potential, allowing young people to engage more actively with its programming and co-create content. These efforts align with Waisbord's (2008) assertion that participatory communication must be supported by adequate resources and infrastructure to ensure inclusivity and equity.

In conclusion, while *Musina FM* has demonstrated its potential to empower rural youth through participatory programming, several structural, financial, and technological barriers undermine its effectiveness. These barriers restrict access to the station's offerings, limiting its ability to serve as an inclusive platform for socio-economic transformation. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach, including increased governmental support, investment in infrastructure upgrades, and innovative strategies for integrating digital and traditional media. By tackling these barriers, *Musina FM* could significantly enhance its participatory and empowerment potential, ensuring that it serves as a model for community radio stations seeking to engage and uplift marginalised rural populations.

6.2.4 Strategies for youth empowerment

The findings of this study reveal that *Musina FM* employs a variety of youth-centred strategies aimed at fostering socio-economic empowerment, with a notable emphasis on the integration of digital technologies. These strategies include the use of popular social media platforms such as TikTok, WhatsApp, and Facebook to expand accessibility and encourage active participation among digitally oriented youth. By creating interactive spaces for real-time engagement, such as critiques, questions, and collaborative content creation, *Musina FM* demonstrates an alignment with Freire's (1970) participatory communication principles, which emphasize dialogue and mutual engagement as critical tools for empowerment. This digital approach positions the youth not as passive recipients of content but as active participants in shaping and responding to the narratives that matter to their lives.

The study's participants identified the potential of this "hybrid" model, which combines the strengths of traditional radio broadcasting with digital platforms, as a transformative strategy for maintaining relevance in an increasingly digital world. By embracing this hybrid model, *Musina FM* can transcend the limitations of traditional transmission, which restricts its reach to a 60 km radius, and instead engage a broader audience of rural youth who may lack access to conventional radio infrastructure. This strategy not only amplifies the station's capacity to deliver youth empowerment programming but also provides an avenue for overcoming the spatial and technological barriers associated with rural underdevelopment (Waisbord, 2008). Moreover, the integration of social networks fosters participatory dialogue on professional, personal, and community issues, thereby enabling young people to express their perspectives and contribute to problem-solving in real-time. Such engagement promotes interactional empowerment, as described by Zimmerman (2000), by equipping youth with the capacity to influence their social environments through access to platforms that value their voices.

Musina FM's evolution toward integrating digital platforms illustrates its recognition of the critical role that these tools play in the advancement and empowerment of youth. By using digital networks to sustain vibrant interaction, the station captures and retains the attention of young audiences, fostering deeper engagement and sustained interest. This reflects Carpentier's (2018) emphasis on participation as both a means and a process for achieving empowerment. Through participation, *Musina FM* empowers youth to challenge traditional structures, engage in critical social issues, and contribute to solutions within their communities. These digital strategies are not merely supplementary but transformative, enabling *Musina FM* to cultivate a more inclusive, multi-channel empowerment model that bridges traditional and modern modes of communication.

In addition to creating platforms for discussion, *Musina FM's* participatory communication strategies provide rural youth with opportunities to articulate grievances and engage in critical debates about social and economic challenges. Participants noted that the station's inclusive approach helps young people feel valued as contributors to community dialogue, fostering a sense of maturity and agency. This is consistent with Freire's (1970) argument that empowering individuals involves creating conditions where their voices matter in decision-making processes. Such practices align with Zimmerman's intrapersonal empowerment dimension, which focuses on building self-efficacy, confidence, and a sense of control over one's life. However, the findings also underscore the need to move beyond dialogue by incorporating more purposive programming tailored to address the socio-economic realities of rural youth.

While *Musina FM's* current strategies allow for meaningful engagement, the study highlights the importance of expanding the station's focus to include specialised skill-building programmes. Vocational training, financial literacy, and career guidance were identified as critical areas where *Musina FM* could strengthen its empowerment efforts. Programmes that provide practical, action-oriented resources would enable youth to translate their participation in discussions into actionable outcomes, enhancing their behavioural empowerment (Zimmerman, 2000). For instance, skills training initiatives could help youth apply the insights gained from debates to real-world scenarios, such as entrepreneurship or community development projects. Similarly, guidance on accessing development resources and building financial independence would empower young listeners to take concrete steps toward socio-economic mobility, addressing structural inequities that perpetuate rural underdevelopment.

By serving as both a platform for dialogue and a conduit for resources, *Musina FM* could expand its role as a catalyst for youth-driven change. The incorporation of practical skill-building initiatives would align with Waisbord's (2008) call for participatory communication initiatives to provide not only access to dialogue but also pathways to tangible socio-economic benefits. Such initiatives would address critical gaps in rural youth development, offering tools that empower individuals while strengthening the collective resilience of their communities. This dual approach, balancing participatory communication with targeted skill-building would render *Musina FM's* empowerment mission more holistic and impactful.

The study stresses that while *Musina FM's* participatory approach forms the foundation of its empowerment efforts, the integration of practical skill-building initiatives would complement and enhance its existing programming. This would not only address the diverse needs of rural youth but also align with Carpentier's (2018) vision of participatory media as a dynamic tool for social transformation. Through programmes that combine dialogue with skill acquisition, *Musina FM*

could evolve from being a mouthpiece for youth concerns to an active partner in creating opportunities for socio-economic advancement.

In conclusion, *Musina FM*'s youth empowerment strategies demonstrate an innovative blend of traditional and digital approaches that leverage participatory communication to engage rural youth meaningfully. However, to fully realise its potential as an agent of socio-economic empowerment, the station must expand its programming to include more specialised initiatives that address the practical needs of its audience. By doing so, *Musina FM* could position itself as a model for community radio stations seeking to empower youth in rural contexts, providing not only a voice for the voiceless but also the tools and resources needed to effect sustainable development.

6.3 Recommendations

- The study recommends that *Musina FM* diversify its youth programming by addressing career counselling, mental health, and entrepreneurial skills to cater to the development needs of the youth.
- *Musina FM* can solicit more resources and establish relationships with local organisations to enable the development of other new or more improved programmes for the station.
- *Musina FM* should look for ways to increase its network reach and the time it programmes to air frequency so that more people can access the programmes.
- *Musina FM* should enhance existing programmes by improving them with fun interaction, professional talks, practical classes, and events where youths can practice what they are taught.
- *Musina FM* should invest in research and try to increase the number of people who can listen to *Musina FM* in villages by expanding the range of radio frequency.

6.4.1 Suggestions for future practice

As the research has recommended, *Musina FM* should increase the number of its programmes to consider more of the critical aspects affecting rural youth, especially in employment and vocational training. For instance, *Musina FM* may develop programmes which educate the youth on how to look for a job, write an attractive CV, and prepare themselves for the job interview. Furthermore, vocational skills related to the trades of carpentry, tailoring, and agriculture, for example, will provide the rural youth with career opportunities other than formal education. With such commitment to broaden operational scope elements, the station would then be in a better position to address the economic requirements of the youth, thus actively engaging them in meaningful, productive activities. If such skill-enhancing and professional capabilities

development areas as outlined above are attended to, *Musina FM* will assist in reducing the rural youth unemployment menace and, in the process, foster economic growth within the communities served by the station.

Furthermore, some of the barriers related to location can be overcome by using digital platforms such as social media, WhatsApp, and streaming services, and this is where *Musina FM* can interact with more young people. These digital tools, combined with social media, would assist the station in targeting young people who lack access to radio, especially those in rural and high-density suburbs. Social media networks like Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram represent active places where listeners can give feedback on content, participate in discussions or polls, and respond to content that is shared in real-time. This digital outreach would not only increase the penetration of *Musina FM* but also make the programs interesting by facilitating feedback. Similarly, having a digital presence would enable *Musina FM* to preserve a collection of past programs so that young audiences can watch them when they prefer. *Musina FM* can create a better ambience by using social networks to engage more youths.

6.3.2 Areas for further research

The role of community radio in helping youth over the long term and the practices and social transformations they undergo as a result of participating in the programs can also be essential areas of investigation for future research. Moreover, exploring how new technologies can serve to expand the audience of community radio might be helpful for boosting the interest of youths in this medium, especially in rural areas where the mainstream media may be ineffective.

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ANNEXURES

Annexure one: Focus group discussion questions with Musina youth

Awareness and engagement with *Musina FM*.

1. What are your favourite programs on *Musina FM*, and why?
2. In what ways do you participate or engage with these programs? (e.g., call-ins, social media interaction, or community events).
3. In your opinion, do you think *Musina FM* has programs aimed at empowering youth in rural Musina areas? And which are those programs?
4. How did you first learn about the *Musina FM* programs aimed at youth?
5. Can you recall a specific program or segment that particularly resonated with you? Please describe it.
6. How do you think *Musina FM* tailors its content to appeal to young people in the community?

The impact of *Musina FM* programs on youth empowerment.

7. In your opinion, how do *Musina FM* programs empower the youth in the community?
8. Can you share any personal experiences where you felt empowered or informed by a program on *Musina FM*?
9. How do you think *Musina FM* programs influence the attitudes and behaviours of young people in your community?
10. Are there any topics or issues you feel are not adequately covered by *Musina FM* that could benefit youth in the Musina rural area?
11. How does *Musina FM* contribute to your understanding of local and national issues?

Youth response and benefits from *Musina FM* programs.

12. How do you typically respond to the content you hear on *Musina FM*? (e.g., discussion with peers, taking action, changing perspective)
13. Have you noticed any changes in your knowledge, attitudes, or behaviour since you started listening to *Musina FM*? Please explain.
14. Do you think *Musina FM* has a role in shaping the cultural or social identity of the youth in Musina? How so?
15. What benefits do you believe *Musina FM* provides to young listeners compared to other media sources?
16. Have you ever been directly involved in any activities or initiatives as a result of listening to *Musina FM*?

Improvements and replicability of *Musina FM* programs.

17. What improvements would you suggest for *Musina FM* to better serve and empower the youth of the community?
18. Are there specific topics or areas you feel should be covered more extensively by *Musina FM*?
19. How do you think the success of *Musina FM*'s youth programs could be replicated in other community radio stations?
20. What role do you think listeners should play in shaping the content of *Musina FM*?
21. Looking towards the future, how do you envision the role of *Musina FM* evolving in the community?

Annexure Two: Semi-structured Interview questions - *Musina FM* staff

Programs broadcasted in *Musina FM*.

1. How do you engage the young people residing in Musina rural areas when choosing radio programs?
2. Which programs do you play that allows youth in rural areas in Musina to vent their challenges?
3. How do your programs address challenges and issues faced by the young people in the rural areas in Musina?
4. How do you create the platform for engagement between the young people and the Government and other stakeholders in Musina?
5. In your opinion, do you think *Musina FM* has programs aimed at empowering the youth and are they effective?

Participatory communication for youth empowerment through *Musina FM*.

6. What do you understand by participatory communication for social change?
7. Does *Musina FM* have a policy framework for participatory communication in their programs?
8. How does *Musina FM* encompass principles of participatory communication in its programs?

Strategies that *Musina FM* can adopt to improve youth empowerment in the Musina region.

9. Strategies that *Musina FM* can adopt to improve youth empowerment in the Musina region.
10. Which strategies can the radio station put in place to make sure that the youth in Musina particularly rural youth are engaged?
11. How can the radio create a platform for Local Government and other stakeholders to engage with the youth for addressing social issues that concern them?
12. How can the Musina radio tailor-made its programs to improve youth empowerment in the Musina Area?
13. Which strategies can the radio station put in place to make sure that the young people are engaged in rural Musina?

14. How can the radio create a platform for local government to engage with the community for addressing social issues of the community?

Annexure Three: Ethical Clearance



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**Basic and Social Sciences Research Ethics
Committee (BaSSREC)**

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Training and Support**
Tel: 018 285 2457

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Senate Committee for Research Ethics
Tel: 016 103 4448
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11 July 2024

ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY

Based on approval by the **Basic and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (BaSSREC)** on **09/07/2024**, the Basic and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee hereby **approves** your study as indicated below. This implies that the North-West University Senate Committee for Research Ethics (NWU-SERC) grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the study may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

Study title: Community radio and youth empowerment in rural areas: An exploratory study of Musina FM, South Africa.																												
Study Leader/Supervisor (Principal Investigator)/Researcher: Dr. C. Mbengabanda & Dr. Q. Mgogo																												
Student/Research Team: M. Siphuma (28265165)																												
Ethics number:	<table border="1"><tr><td>N</td><td>W</td><td>U</td><td>-</td><td>0</td><td>0</td><td>9</td><td>8</td><td>7</td><td>-</td><td>2</td><td>4</td><td>-</td><td>A</td><td>7</td></tr><tr><td colspan="3">Institution</td><td colspan="3">Study Number</td><td colspan="3">Year</td><td colspan="3">Status</td></tr></table> <i>Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation</i>	N	W	U	-	0	0	9	8	7	-	2	4	-	A	7	Institution			Study Number			Year			Status		
N	W	U	-	0	0	9	8	7	-	2	4	-	A	7														
Institution			Study Number			Year			Status																			
Application Type: Single Study																												
Commencement date: 09/07/2024	Risk: <table border="1"><tr><td>Low risk</td></tr></table>	Low risk																										
Low risk																												
Expiry date: 09/07/2025																												
Approval of the study is initially provided for a year, after which continuation of the study is dependent on receipt and review of the annual (or as otherwise stipulated) monitoring report and the concomitant issuing of a letter of continuation.																												

Special in process conditions of the research for approval (if applicable):

General conditions:

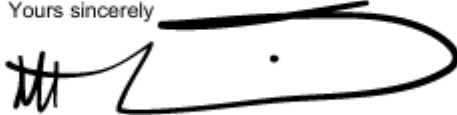
While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, the following general terms and conditions will apply:

- *The study leader/supervisor (principal investigator)/researcher must report in the prescribed format to the BaSSREC:*
 - *annually (or as otherwise requested) on the monitoring of the study, whereby a letter of continuation will be provided, and upon completion of the study; and*
 - *without any delay in case of any adverse event or incident (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the study.*

- The approval applies strictly to the proposal as stipulated in the application form. Should any amendments to the proposal be deemed necessary during the course of the study, the study leader/researcher must apply for approval of these amendments at the BaSSREC, prior to implementation. Should there be any deviations from the study proposal without the necessary approval of such amendments, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
- Annually a number of studies may be randomly selected for an external audit.
- The date of approval indicates the first date that the study may be started.
- In the interest of ethical responsibility, the NWU-SCRE and BaSSREC reserves the right to:
 - request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the study;
 - to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process;
 - withdraw or postpone approval if:
 - any unethical principles or practices of the study are revealed or suspected;
 - it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the BaSSREC or that information has been false or misrepresented;
 - submission of the annual (or otherwise stipulated) monitoring report, the required amendments, or reporting of adverse events or incidents was not done in a timely manner and accurately; and / or
 - new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.
- BaSSREC can be contacted for further information or any report templates via BaSSREC-Admin@nwu.ac.za.

The BaSSREC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your study. Please do not hesitate to contact the BaSSREC or the NWU-SCRE for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely



Prof. E. Idemudia

Chairperson NWU Basic and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee