

The nature of participatory communication
in Ward Meetings of Ward 12 in
the Jouberton Township of Matlosana
Municipality.

NL Kgathane

 orcid.org/0000-0003-4980-0634

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

Supervisor: Dr TB Molale

Graduation: May 2023

Student number: 21443718

DECLARATION

I, **Ntlantla Lucky Kgathane** declare herewith that the thesis entitled: “**The nature of participatory communication in Ward Meetings of Ward Meeting of Ward 12 in Jouberton Township of Matlosana Municipality**”, which I herewith submit to the North-West University as completion of the requirements set for the degree of Master of Art in Communication Studies, this is my own work and has not been submitted to any other University.

I understand and accept that copies that are submitted for examination are the property of the university.

Signed at Johannesburg on this **29th of November 2022**

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research study to God for being on my side all the time since I was born.

To my mother Ms Sebolelo Kgatlhane; Brother Pontsho Kgatlhane; nephew Lethabo Kgatlhane; and wife Lebogang Tloubatla: thank you for your love, support, and unwavering belief in me. Without you, I would not be the person I am today. I dedicate this to you all. It is possible

To my late grandmother Dorah Kgatlhane; late Aunt Rose Kgatlhane; late uncle Pule Kgatlhane, late sisters Lerato and Segomotso Kgatlhane.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

These acknowledgments go to all those who have contributed immensely to this milestone:

I would like to begin by thanking my supervisor: Dr Tshepang Bright Molale, it sounds too cliché and as an understatement to say Thank you very much and God bless, but thank you for your consistent guidance, support, motivation, tutelage, and unmatched knowledge, without your help this wouldn't have been possible. The time you gave, the compromise and sacrifices you made did not go in vain and will remain in my heart. You have changed my life and this MA would not exist had it not been for your assistance.

To my soon-to-be precious wife, Leboga Tloubatla: I would like to thank you so much, you have been there for me the entire way. You contributed a lot; you were consistently supporting me. Thank you for the encouragements, the love you gave me, and for making me realize my capabilities. Most of all, thank for understanding about the late nights, the time taken from you, and for understanding the mood swings. You are one in a million.

I would like to also thank Mrs Glory Molale: thank you so much, for allowing us all the time we needed to do the work, for allowing me to steal your time and most importantly, for being in my corner. The role you played will forever remain in my heart, thank you, Glory, for believing in me and encouraging me to push harder.

Finally, let me also thank myself it has been easy, and finally, a dream has been realized. The following names have assisted Sebolelo, Lebogang, Maseipati, Pontsho, Tshepo, Tshepiso, Thabang, Bokang, Gomolemo and Lethabo,

ABSTRACT

Communication is an important facilitator of smooth and successful relationships between municipal officials and local citizens. Moreover, it is an important tool used in fostering citizen participation which is required by law in the South African local government sphere. This is because for active citizen participation to be achieved, municipal officials need to organise some communicative forums with local citizens and these forums need to be used to foster rapport and co-existence between them and citizens.

However, various studies conducted around citizen participation in the South African local government sphere reveal several challenges that are experienced in various municipalities. Arguably, these challenges are caused by erroneous facilitation of a top-down communication approach at local government; the lack of a feedback provision mechanism in terms of communication between municipal officials and local citizens; or the lack of citizen empowerment process where local community members are afforded the space to exercise any form of decision-making so that their inputs can inform the local development and social change agenda.

In terms of research, although there is an existing substantial corpus of literature conducted on participatory communication in local government; gaps still exist, where there is a dearth of research focusing on how communication and participation are facilitated in municipal ward meetings. Much of the work that has been conducted primarily focuses on various aspects, such as citizen participation in local economic development and citizen participation in integrated development planning (IDP), amongst other key themes.

Therefore, this study employs a qualitative research approach to explore the nature of participation and communication in municipal ward meetings, using ward 12 in Jouberton township of Matlosana local municipality as a case study. Purposive sampling was used to select respondents. The empirical side of the study comprised semi-structured interviews with three municipal ward committee members as well as focus-group interviews with a total of 23 community members in extensions 17, 22, and 24 of Ward 12 in Jouberton Township.

Analysis of the collected data revealed that Ward 12 in Jouberton township of Matlosana municipality is facing challenges when it comes to citizen participation. The researcher found opposing views from participants on both sides regarding participation. On the one hand, officials said citizen participation existed; while residents, on the other hand, held the view that was opposing the officials. Such contradictions are concerning, especially because, by law, all

municipalities are required to ensure that all development planning is informed by citizen participation.

The study also revealed that power and decision-making lie with municipal officials. This is a problem because some community members argued that during meetings, they find themselves disempowered, hence they do not see the meaning of such meetings. From these findings, it was clear that participation, dialogue, and empowerment cannot be divorced from each other when considering the role that they play in citizen participation processes in ward meetings.

The study makes several recommendations related to how participatory communication can be improved at ward meetings; and highlights the need to re-establish relationships between participants, for attitude change to take place between all parties, for educational opportunities to be provided for residents to enhance their participation and alleviate civic apathy, and the need for a consultative approach to be applied.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----------|
| DECLARATION..... | I |
| DEDICATION | II |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS..... | III |
| ABSTRACT..... | IV |
| | |
| CHAPTER 1 | 1 |
| | |
| 1.1 Introduction and Background | 1 |
| 1.2 Problem Statement | 4 |
| 1.3 Main Research Aim | 5 |
| 1.3.1 Objectives of the Study | 5 |
| 1.4 Main Research Question | 6 |
| 1.4.1 Research Questions..... | 6 |
| 1.5 Significance of the Study | 6 |
| 1.6 Literature Review | 6 |
| 1.7 Theoretical Framework..... | 10 |
| 1.7.1 Development Communication | 10 |
| 1.7.2 Freire’s Dialogical Praxis..... | 12 |
| 1.8 Research Methodology..... | 15 |
| 1.8.1 Research Design | 16 |
| 1.8.2 Population..... | 16 |
| 1.8.2.1 Sampling (Participants in the Study) | 16 |
| 1.9 Data Collection..... | 18 |

| | | |
|---|--|-----------|
| 1.9.1 | Semi-Structured Interviews | 18 |
| 1.9.2 | Focus-Group Interviews | 18 |
| 1.10 | Data Analysis | 18 |
| 1.11 | Limitations of the Study | 19 |
| 1.12 | Ethical Considerations | 19 |
| 1.13 | Chapter Outline | 20 |
| 1.14 | Conclusion | 20 |
| CHAPTER 2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK & LITERATURE REVIEW..... | | 21 |
| 2.1 | Introduction | 21 |
| 2.2 | Development Communication..... | 22 |
| 2.2.1 | The Evolution and Paradigm Shifts within the field of Development Communication | 25 |
| 2.3 | Freire's Dialogical Praxis..... | 32 |
| 2.4 | Basic Principle of Participatory Development Communication..... | 35 |
| 2.4.1 | Dialogue..... | 35 |
| 2.4.2 | Community Participation | 36 |
| 2.4.3 | Empowerment..... | 36 |
| 2.5 | Conclusion | 40 |
| CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY..... | | 43 |
| 3.1 | Introduction | 43 |
| 3.2 | Research Paradigm..... | 44 |
| 3.3 | Research Design..... | 48 |

| | | |
|--|--|-----------|
| 3.3.1 | Population and Sampling | 49 |
| 3.3.2 | Purposive Sampling | 49 |
| 3.4 | Data Collection..... | 50 |
| 3.4.1 | Interviews..... | 50 |
| 3.5 | The Outcome of the Study’s Sampling Frame | 54 |
| 3.6 | Data Analysis. | 60 |
| 3.6.1 | Logistics relating to the data collection procedure and challenges experienced | 60 |
| 3.7 | Identified categories, themes and codes..... | 61 |
| 3.8 | Reliability..... | 63 |
| 3.8.1 | Reliability procedures..... | 63 |
| 3.9 | Ethics clearance application, gatekeeper’s consent, and ethical considerations | 64 |
| 3.10 | Conclusion | 65 |
| CHAPTER 4 DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION | | 66 |
| 4.1 | Introduction..... | 66 |
| 4.2 | Findings from Semi-Structured Interviews | 67 |
| 4.2.1 | Presentation and Analysis of Data from Semi-Structured Interviews to Address the Study’s Second Research Question | 67 |
| 4.3 | Findings from Focus-Group Interviews..... | 79 |
| 4.3.1 | Presentation and Analysis of Data from Focus Group Interviews to Address the Study’s Third Research Question..... | 79 |
| 4.4 | Concluding remarks | 94 |

| | | |
|--|--|------------|
| 4.5 | REFLEXIVITY: The subjective experience of the researcher in the process of this whole study | 96 |
| | | |
| CHAPTER 5 SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION..... | | 97 |
| 5.1 | Overview | 97 |
| 5.2 | Introduction..... | 97 |
| 5.3 | Summary of research findings..... | 99 |
| 5.3.1 | Research Objectives | 99 |
| 5.4 | Recommendations of the Study..... | 101 |
| 5.4.1 | Recommendation on Ward Committee Members;..... | 101 |
| 5.4.2 | Recommendation on ward councillor | 101 |
| 5.4.3 | Recommendation on ward councillor | 102 |
| 5.4.4 | Recommendation on community members | 102 |
| 5.5 | Limitation of the study..... | 103 |
| REFERENCES:..... | | 104 |
| ANNEXURE A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE/APPROVAL LETTER FROM NWU | | 115 |
| ANNEXURE B: LETTER OF APPROVAL FROM MATLOSANA MUNICIPALITY..... | | 117 |
| ANNEXURE C: SEMI-STRUCTURE INTERVIEW GUIDE..... | | 118 |
| ANNEXURE D: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE..... | | 122 |
| ANNEXURE E: CERTIFICATE OF LANGUAGE EDITING | | 126 |

LIST OF TABLES

| | |
|--|----|
| Table 3-1: A Summary demostrating a link between sampling technique used and the sample respondents for focus-group interviews as well as semi-structured interviews | 50 |
| Table 3-2: Profile of Semi-structured interviewees | 52 |
| Table 3-3 Semi-structured interview pseudonyms for participants, respondents, and their brief context..... | 54 |
| Table 3-4: Constructs used in development of semi-structured interview questions..... | 54 |
| Table 3-5: Focus Group respondent pseudonyms for participants' and their context..... | 56 |
| Table 3-6 Constructs used in development of focus group interview questions..... | 58 |
| Table 3-7 Thematic analysis categories, themes and codes | 61 |

CHAPTER 1

1.1 Introduction and Background

In a post-apartheid dispensation, the municipal sphere of government in South Africa introduced ward meetings as a way of enabling the participation of citizens in all municipal government issues, including the drafting and formulation of a municipal Integrated Development Plan (IDP). According to the Municipal Systems Act (Act 32 of 2000), local and district municipalities are charged with the responsibility of establishing, continuing, and sustaining a social change and local development in the lives of ordinary citizens within their jurisdictions. Through this making community participation sacrosanct to the running of all municipal affairs.

Given that each municipality covers a large geographic area, they are broken down and demarcated according to wards or sections where the population can be clustered according to smaller communities as a way of streamlining service delivery and achieving community participation. In this way, a ward meeting becomes an essential platform where citizen participation can be facilitated (cf. Leboea, 2003; Scott, 2005; Madumo, 2011; Thabanchu, 2011; Ako, 2017) in line with the Municipal Systems Act (see South Africa, 2000).

A ward committee is a body that consists of eleven members who are selected within a specific community in a certain ward. This includes a councillor, who is a politician, elected for a term of five years and is charged with leading a ward. The remaining ten members of the committee are elected from the community. This election is overseen by the ward councillor after they assume office at the start of their term. The ward committee serves as a direct link between those who are democratically elected to public office, within the local sphere of government, and ordinary citizens. Ward committees are, therefore, required to foster communication and engagement amongst residents and local government through the facilitation of community ward meetings for the purpose of public participation (c.f. De Vries, 2018:5; Leboea, 2003:50; Mkhwanazi, 2013: 42; Napier, 2008).

However, there seem to be critical gaps regarding the nature of communication in municipal ward meeting. Regardless of the introduction of ward committees and the facilitation of ward meetings, municipal governments in South Africa have experienced challenges related to public frustration and a lack of public trust as a result of community protests linked to a perceived shortage (or lack) of services (Williams, 2006; Dayimani, 2022; Alexander, Runciman, Ngwane, Moloto, Mokgele, & Van Staden, 2018).

In describing communication, Choudhury (2011:1) regards it as more than an act of passing information from one individual to the next and a tool used to facilitate participation of people in developmental activities. In the same breath, communication, as Steinburg (2006: 13) asserts, can be viewed as a dynamic practice of exchanging meaningful information and negotiating meaning.

Although communication can be understood as an information exchange process, (i.e., from a cybernetic perspective), in line with Craig's (2007) traditions of communication theory; this description may be problematic and vague when used to describe the nature of communication in municipal ward meetings. On another level, if communication is viewed from a rhetorical perspective (see Craig, 2007), where emphasis is on the use of persuasive devices to influence favourable behaviour change in others; it might also be problematic to perceive communication in municipal ward meetings given that ward meetings are supposed be participatory in nature (cf. Molale, 2019). This may explain why municipal ward meetings (i.e., public participation processes) are characterised by a reliance on persuasive communication (i.e., political communication in line with the rhetoric tradition), instead of more engaging and dialogical conceptualisations (i.e., socio-cultural tradition or phenomenological approach (Leboea, 2003; Williams, 2006; Molale, 2021 Cosmin-Constantin & Claudia, 2015:170).

Ward meetings are spaces that demand community participation and, therefore, communication as a process needs to be defined in a participatory sense, in line with participatory communication (Molale, 2014). Then, in this context, communication refers to an empowering process where people are allowed to voice their opinion, here an opportunity is given to those who are seen to be less powerful to determine their own destiny. Participation emanates from development; the latter is described as an ethical act which is important in the lives of the people involved in the process. Active participation during in the decision-making process that has to do with development is crucial to sustainable development (Msibi & Penzhorn, 2010: 9; Molale, 2021; Molale & Fourie, 2022).

With that being said, various studies have identified a lack of trust, rapport, and a disconnect between local citizens and their representatives in different areas across South Africa from varied vantage points (c.f. Thabanchu, 2011; Molale 2014; Mtshali, 2016, Molale, 2021) and different contexts. There is a need to probe if indeed the same problems are experienced and can be identified in the case of ward meetings. Ward meetings, according to relevant legislation in South Africa, are required to advance participatory democracy and an active level of community participation (see South Africa, 2000). One reason behind the proposal for such a study is the present dearth of research devoted to issues surrounding the nature of participation

(i.e., from the perspective of participatory communication) during ward meetings even though various studies have identified community participation as a critical driving force in the delivery of quality basic services to the public.

For example, Draai and Taylor (2009) reviewed the constitutional objectives that indicate the necessity for public participation, paying attention to what legislative prescription says. Additionally, Mautjana and Makombe's (2014) study assessed community participation in the IDP process and focused on attempting to address the service delivery protests which are used as an expression of community dissatisfaction and frustrations. While on the other hand, Bakre and Dorasamy (2018) focused on the disconnect between local government and community members as a clear sign of dissatisfaction from the community (in this case a series of boycotts and vandalism of municipal infrastructures) as retaliation for feeling ignored and left out in matters of local development and social change. The authors highlighted that people's participation was greater in the national and provincial government than in the local government. This is ironic since municipalities are the sphere of government closest to people and is thus supposed to be their first point of contact.

The foregoing emanates from the perspective that there are deep-rooted theoretical problems related to how participation is interpreted and understood (cf. Cornwall, 2007; Eversole, 2003) by various social actors. Additionally, in the absence of any research devoted to the nature of participatory communication during ward meetings, it might as well be that different interpretations of what community participation is also exist in the context of municipal ward meetings. This problem of interpretation may be behind the perceived lack of trust and rapport that is highlighted by the various scholars above. It is from this point of departure that a need exists to investigate and explore the nature of participatory communication (in relation to the notion of community participation) during ward meetings. Especially since the ward meetings are chaired by politically elected public representatives (ward councillors) who are supposed to facilitate public ward meetings and enable public participation so that development and social change can be informed by inputs of all citizens (cf. Leboea, 2003; South Africa, 2000; Mautjana & Makombe, 2014; Molale, 2019).

In light of the foregoing, it is arguable that research which focuses on contextualising and deconstructing how participation is facilitated during ward meetings is needed to better understand the way in which ordinary citizens interact with their elected public office bearers and ascertain if they understand their roles in the participatory process. This will help in primarily identifying shortcomings, if any, and contribute towards enriching the public participatory system within the context of ward meetings since they are perceived to be viable platforms that can

facilitate feedback between municipalities and local citizens. Additionally, this research will also contribute to the corpus of literature on the subject matter.

Participation as a concept has found various interpretation in a number of theoretical traditions which, according to some, describe it to have had impact in the reforming of the concept and its meaning making it quite “fluid”. But as a concept in this context, participation can simply mean the sharing of power, mainly because its roots are linked to concept of democracy. In Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of citizen participation, the participation of citizens in development planning processes, the talk around institutionalised politics, is highly emphasised. The ladder mostly explains that resident’ encounter a challenge that decreases their abilities to showcase power, but also argues to move away from non-participator and tokenistic participation. This also finds full expression in Tufte and Mefalopulos’s (2009) typology of participation, where it illustrates participation in four different ways (i.e., passive, consultation, functional, and empowered participation) (Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009; Mefalopulos, 2008: 11).

Empirically, the study is based on Ward 12 in the Jouberton Township of Matlosana Local Municipality situated in North-West Province. The municipality forms part of the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District and comprises of Klerksdorp, Orkney, Hartebeesfontein, and Stilfontein. The historical background of the district dates to the gold-rush era in the 1880s, its economy is based on mining and agriculture industries. The city of Matlosana is one of the rapidly developing municipalities in South Africa with an estimated annual budget of R3.2 billion (2017/18). Notably, this ward is located in a municipality which, like others around the country, has experienced violent public unrest and public frustrations over perceived lack of service delivery. According to its recent IDP document, the municipality has a backlog of about R347.95 million to serve a population of about four hundred thousand residents (In 2019/20; North-West Provincial Gazette, 4).

1.2 Problem Statement

Citizen participation in municipal sphere is essential in ensuring that participatory democracy is achieved, as envisaged in the different laws in South Africa, including the Municipal Systems Act and the Constitution country (see South Africa 1996, 2000). However, based on the recorded cases of protests (which at times have been violent) and public frustration across South Africa in contemporary history, the relationship between local citizens and their elected leaders is plagued by challenges of trust, and in most cases, it would seem that citizens do not enjoy active participation in local government affairs (Alexander et al., 2018; Dayimani, 2022; Williams, 2006).

In academia, various studies (at least in the last decade) have pointed out that citizens do not enjoy active and genuine participation in municipal affairs, whether it is in the context of integrated development planning, budgeting, and local economic development (c.f. Naidoo, 2010; Madumo, 2011; Thabanchu, 2011; Molale, 2014; Molale, 2019; Molale & Fourie, 2022; Jooste, 2014; Sebola, 2017; Mtshali, 2016; Ali, 2017; Alexander, 2018). However, all these studies, given their particularity, contexts, and scope, do not address or explore participation from the perspective of participatory communication in ward meetings. These meetings are arguably the primary platforms for interaction, feedback and interaction between community members and their ward leaders (i.e., ward councillors and committee members). This is a knowledge gap identified and focused upon in the present study.

Additionally, the present study is conducted under the assumption that there is a lacunae of research interest given to the subject matter as shown by the existence of only three studies that were conducted in the period between 2010 and 2021, which touch on specific themes such as participatory communication in local government, from a perspective of Integrated Development Planning (see Molale, 2014; Molale, 2021; Msibi & Penzhorn, 2010), while another study is exclusively rooted in political science and participatory democracy (see Thabanchu, 2011). This dearth of research devoted to participatory communication in local government's public participation processes is concerning, especially given that public participation features as a prominent concept that has been explored in great lengths, in the perspective of South African context literature in public administration and local government (c.f. Leboea, 2003; Ababio, 2004; Barichievy, Piper, & Parker, 2005; Mojapelo, 2007; Cash & Swatuk, 2010; Bauer, 2009; Aklilu, Belete, & Moyo, 2014).

Against the foregoing, a question that remains unanswered is: *what is the nature of participatory communication between ward councillors and the public in ward 12 in Jouberton at Matlosana Local Municipality?*

1.3 Main Research Aim

The study aims to explore the nature of participatory communication between ward councillors and the public in ward 12 in Jouberton at Matlosana Local Municipality.

1.3.1 Objectives of the Study

By means of semi-structured interview and focus-group, the study seeks to:

- Consult literature on the guidelines of participatory communication in ordinary ward meetings in the South African local government landscape.

- Probe, through semi-structured interviews, how councillors and ward committee members in Matlosana Local Municipality facilitate communication platforms/channels in light of community participation in ward meetings, and;
- Explore, through focus-group interviews, the perceptions of role-players (i.e., community members) regarding the nature of participatory communication during ward meetings.

1.4 Main Research Question

What is the nature of participatory communication between ward councillors and the public in ward 12 in Jouberton at Matlosana Local Municipality?

1.4.1 Research Questions

- What, according to literature, are the implications of participatory communication as it relates to the nature of participation in ordinary ward meetings in the South African local government landscape?
- How do councillors and ward committee members in Matlosana Local Municipality facilitate communication platforms/channels in light of community participation in ward meetings, and;
- What are the perceptions of role-players (i.e., community members) regarding the nature of participatory communication during ward meetings?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The research contributes to the body of knowledge in participatory communication with a focus on public participation and local government in South Africa. On a theoretical level, the study draws a link between participatory communication and dialogical praxis with the aim of revealing the developmental and empowering nature of participation that should be adopted within the context of participatory communication in municipal ward meetings.

1.6 Literature Review

The following databases and sources were consulted for reviewing relevant and related literature for the study:

(NWU Mafikeng Campus Library, EBSCOhost, Google Scholar, JSTOR, ProQuest, NRF Nexus Database System, SAE International, and Boloka (NWU's institutional publication repository)).

An in-depth review of literature, which did not yield any similar study to the current one, shows a knowledge gap in terms of what ought to be the nature of communication in municipal ward meetings, and this will be explored. Additionally, a nexus search from the NRF's repository of previous and current research in the last two decade did not identify any study devoted to exploring the nature of participatory communication in municipal ward meetings.

For instance, in his study, Molale (2014) focuses on the extent of participatory communication in the Integrated Development Planning in Matlosana Local Municipality. Although it was useful, the research exclusively focused on specific community IDP meetings to study the extent of participatory communication during these meetings. Furthermore, Molale (2021) recently conducted a study and developed a framework for application of participatory communication in institutionalised public participation in municipal Integrated Development Plan processes. However, general monthly meetings that are presided over by the councillor and ward committee members were not addressed in this research. On the other hand, Ali (2017) investigated the perception and practice of participatory communication for development. The research exclusively zoomed in on Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) named "Organisation for Rehabilitation and Development in Amhara" (ORDA) in Ethiopia. The study dealt with participatory development communication model which is meant to assist to bring socio-economic change. The study is based on the manner in which participatory development communication is perceived and practiced in Organisation for Rehabilitation and Development in Amhara, but not during community meetings or rather ward meetings. This study, therefore, does little in explaining how participatory communication ought to be applied during meetings.

Against this background, the present study is premised on the view that participatory communications facilitate development. This assumption has rarely been made in previous studies. For instance, Leboea (2003) came close with his exploration of community participation through the ward system, but the study is approached from a public administration perspective and its theoretical application is not rooted in participatory communication. Notwithstanding, the study does make important points that are on the basis of the present research on the nature of participation and communication in ward meetings in Matlosana Local Municipality. These points include, among other issues, a treatment of the challenges faced by communities during the public participation process and the role that they play, which is interpreted as passive participation.

In another study that explored residents' perceptions on participation, particularly through voting, Mojapelo (2007) found that a majority pointed to the importance of voting for leaders in line with the ethos of participatory democracy. Furthermore, the study highlighted the

importance of councillors particularly as being a link between stakeholders during the ward meetings. However, less attention is given to analysing the way in which these actors conduct themselves during ward meetings.

Furthermore, the study also revealed that during the IDP meetings, residents were given minimal time to express their needs while politicians were given more time to talk. This type of participation can be interpreted as not active participation, as Tufte and Mefalopoulos (2009) assert in their typology. It is also important to note that the study discovered that some politicians who are given talking time, often do not report back on what was promised in previous encounters with the communities. Instead, these politicians always get new needs from communities (Mojapelo, 2007:107).

Ako's (2017) study focused on municipal development communication administrators, staff members or agencies that were responsible for designing and executing citizen engagement policies. This study particularly focused on the way in which these staff members responded to their respective communities and citizens' concerns. Furthermore, the study interrogated the participants' understanding and perception of participatory development communication as explained during the interview sessions of the study. In this regard, the findings yielded both unanimous and divergent responses. On one hand, all participants were conversant with the concept of participatory development as they all shared the same view that their jobs are related to designing strategies to engage with communities. Therefore, they all had understanding about participatory development. On the other hand, when quizzed on their knowledge of participatory development as it is practiced in development communication, the response was different. Nonetheless, it should be noted that, the research pay attention on employees and not ordinary members who do not always have knowledge on how participatory development ought to be applied.

Madumo's (2011) study focused on exposing the misunderstanding about the expectations of the residents in terms of the roles and functions of ward meetings in facilitating public participation. The research investigated the challenges which are stabling blocks and prevent the functioning of ward committees in local government from an administration point of view. Moreover, the study aimed at evaluating the relevance and the effectiveness of ward committees in ensuring the involvement of the citizens in an instance where a municipality is in the process of formulating programmes that achieve effective and equitable service delivery, notwithstanding its relevance when it comes to the effectiveness of ward committees. Yet, the study failed to address the question of how participatory communications as a phenomenon ought to take place in ward meetings. Jooste (2014) referred to the nature of participatory

communication between stakeholders in 'bhive' a university incubator project that provided insightful perspectives and triggered a need to explore the nature of participatory communication in municipal ward committee systems. The study highlighted that there is always a need to improve, especially when dealing with communication that is meant to have an impact, particularly in the lives of individuals.

Similarly, Chaka (2011) looked at the input of rhetoric on development communication from a public relations perspective. This study exclusively focused on the manner in which speeches made by former South African presidents Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki, as well as then sitting president, Jacob Zuma contributes to nation building, identity, and social change. This study is equally as useful because of its contribution to building a theoretical framework for the current study. However, the research study is limited in as far as its input of public relations towards nation building goes. This is mainly because the study does not look into the nature of participatory communication in municipal ward meetings.

In this regard, there is a clear indication that although many researches have been done in the field of public and/or community participation on the other hand, and participatory communication on another, there is yet to be a research study that exclusively deals with the nature of participatory communications focusing on municipal ward meetings. The study aims to fill this gap as its contribution to the body of knowledge. Notably, various studies have been consulted to draw sufficient theoretical and empirical grounds for the current study to be conducted. For example, Everett, Marias and Dube's (2010:225) treatise on the depth and quality of public participation in municipal IDP processes provided the study with helpful insights.

The same can be said of Naidoo's (2010) research study on participatory development communication in Thusong Service Centres in Tshwane, as well as Molale's (2014) dissertation on the extent of participatory communication in municipal Integrated Development Plan processes. Similarly, a recent study by Lekopanye, Molale, Ogunsanya and Asak (2021), which explores the participation of a local community radio programming also approaches participatory communication and makes similar assertions about the need for bottom-up, active, and meaningful participation. However, this assertion is made from the perspective of citizen participation in public radio programmes whose content is supposed to be generated by, and with, the community.

In the field of local government and public administration, significant and insightful studies include a critical reflection on the nature and practice of modern-day public participation in local government (Williams, 2006), the use of a multi-criteria decision analysis framework proposed

by Scott (2005), and Leboea's (2003) observation surrounding the nature of community participation through ward systems.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

This section deals with the theoretical leanings of the present research study. The framework emanates from the challenges and context that have been alluded to in the literature review and is also in light of what the Constitution of the South Africa which talks about participation at municipal level (see South Africa, 1996). The research study relies on the following theoretical approaches: development communication, which is also viewed as communication for social change and development and Paulo Freire's dialogical praxis.

1.7.1 Development Communication

Development communication is a field of study interested in exploring ways in which interaction between social actors can yield to development and change in the world in which they live. Modernisation, dependency, and participation are the major paradigms that, in the last seven decades, have been found to have led much debate and contestation among scholars. These paradigms are charged with bringing about development and change in society all across the world.

The field has evolved since Nora Quebral first defined "development communication" in 1971. She coined development communication by describing it as "an art and science of human communication applied to the speedy transformation of a country and the mass of its people from poverty to a dynamic state of economic growth that makes possible greater social equality and the larger fulfilment of the human potential" (Quebral, 2005:54). It is worth noting that this definition has, in the last few decades, undergone changes from this agricultural-centric perspective that Quebral approached it from (Manyozo, 2006).

Arguably, development communication can be classified into three broad streams or paradigms, namely, modernisation, dependency, and participation. In the last seven decades, these paradigms have shaped and reshaped the way in which development is conceived and practiced all over the world, including in the Global South, which was previously referred to as the 'third world'. The modernisation paradigm, which was termed the dominant paradigm in development communication by the 1950s, was highly appreciated and was credited with being instrumental to the emergence of media-centric approaches to development (Manyozo, 2006:80). At the heart of the modernisation paradigm was the belief that if countries in the global south were to adopt 'modern' ways of life, shun their 'primitive' ways of living, and

effectively apply massive infrastructure and economic policies utilised mainly by western nations following the two World Wars, then they too will be as industrialised and developed as their western counterparts (see Melkote & Steeves, 2015; Molale, 2021). While investigating mass media, Lerner (1957) argued that media had a unique ability to invoke empathy on human beings. Additionally, one of the leading scholars in modernisation literature, Everett Rogers (1969), described modernisation as a process where people adjust from their normal way of life to a more different, complex and technologically advanced one. This was in supporting Lerner's (1957) and Schramm's (1997) position on the role of media in influencing behaviour change.

However, by the 1960s, it was clear that some promises of modernisation, which arguably never materialised, were met with criticism mainly from Latin America (Barranquero, 2011). Proponents of what has been referred to as the Latin American school of thought argued that modernisation effectively meant "westernisation" and that dependency became a by-product of modernisation (see Manyozo, 2006; Molale, 2021). These critics of the modernisation paradigm also decried that it is used by western nations to deliberately cause "underdevelopment" of dependant nations in the so-called 'third world' since they rely on their western counterparts for relief aid and other packages offered by Bretton Wood Institutions (see Manyozo, 2008; Melkote & Steeves, 2015; Sylvester, 2016; Van Zyl, 2008; Oso, 2002).

Considering the criticism on the dominant paradigm, by the 1970s as part of research efforts to identifying an "alternative-to-development" model, the participatory paradigm (i.e., participatory communication) was born. Linked to the Post-Freire school of thought, due to the Influence of Brazilian education philosopher, Paulo Freire, the participatory approach to development communication places emphasis on the active involvement of 'subaltern voices' (i.e. the so-called beneficiaries of development) in the development discourse so that they can shape the process with their contribution in decision-making (Chikozho, 2013; Otto & Fourie, 2016; Manyozo, 2006; Mefalopulos, 2008; Lennie & Tacchi, 2011). Participation, dialogue, and empowerment are essential concepts underpinned in participatory communication since it is rooted in the understanding that development and social change cannot take place unless dialogue is used as a facilitator for all individuals, especially the marginalised, and that everyone is active in the development and social change process. This is about providing the marginalised a voice and ensuring they are empowered with the decision-making ability to shape policies for sustained and meaningful social change (Lie & Servaes, 2015: 25, Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009).

In the present study, development communication is linked to Paulo Freire's dialogical praxis. This is mainly because these theories can assist in examining the gaps left by other studies. In

this theory, Freire (1993) identified that dehumanisation, which marks not only those whose humanity has been stolen, but also (though in a different way) those who have stolen it. According to Freire, it is a distortion of the vocation of becoming more fully human. This distortion occurs within history, but it is not a historical vocation. Dehumanisation as an historical vocation would lead either to cynicism or total despair.

Within the context of public participation in the country's Municipal Ward meetings, participatory communication can be used to explore the extent to which a platform is created for communities to have active involvement in development issues affecting their lives. By placing emphasis on the degree to which they are involved (whether active, functional or consultative, passive, or empowered) in accordance with Mefalopulos's (2008) typology of participation; dialogue (whether they are emancipated and they are given the space to use their voice in order to change their world) and empowerment (whether they are given the collective power for them to take decision) in line with Freire's dialogical praxis approach. In light of the above discussion, the following theoretical statement for participatory communication can be offered:

"Participatory Communication, through its emphasis on participation, dialogue, and empowerment, should be used as a facilitator of active and meaningful community participation in municipal ward meetings, where joint creation of ideas as well as collaboration in decision-making are undertaken to ensure that development and social change processes are shaped from the 'bottom-up'."

1.7.2 Freire's Dialogical Praxis

The issue of dialogue has received considerable critical attention in development communication and social change discourse. Arguably, it has influenced Paulo Freire (1993), as part of his thesis that "human existence cannot be silent, nor can it be nourished by false words, but only by true words, with which man and woman transform the world" (Freire, 1993:88). Put simply, Freire (1993) did not only view it as a process of mundane everyday conversation but rather as an interaction between people, mediated by the world, with the objective of naming or transforming it (i.e., praxis). He further analyses it as an "act of creation" that mustn't be used as a weapon to dominate or rather suppress another, regarding dialogue as a main conquest of liberation of humankind.

Hoping to free the oppressed and allow for the application of critical consciousness, Freire's critical/liberation pedagogy focused on challenging traditional norms in education, where students (in his case, adult learners/beneficiaries) relied on the teacher as the sole producer and 'bank' of knowledge (i.e., what he termed 'banking education'). This line of thinking led to

the argument that both teachers and learners (i.e., assumedly an authority figure and the beneficiary in the classroom context) needed to reciprocate, exchange and share ideas as well as experiences (through dialogue) in order for praxis (i.e., changing of the world) to ensue. It was this line of thinking that sparked the interest of scholars in development communication and social change who reviewed communication which is participatory as a suitable methodology that can allow for agency to be placed on the recipient of social change and development so that they can apply critical consciousness in raising their voice to influence decisions taken about the change process.

Within the context of community participation in ward meetings, the presupposition of Freire's conceptualisation is that through dialogue, agency can be placed on local citizens (who are generally inferior figures) so that they can freely make input on development issues while authority figures (in this case ward councillors and their committee members) should afford citizens equal latitude, tolerance and respect to contribute meaningfully in the development process. In a sense, Freire's dialogical praxis approach is hinged on the following two main ideas, firstly, words, in the form of dialogue, are essential when it comes to shaping our reality; and secondly, transformation of the world (i.e., praxis) can only take place if those involved in dialogue are equal subjects in the process (Freire, 1993: 77; Shih, 2018).

In addition, Freire's approach with regard to dialogue is fundamentally rooted in the belief that anyone participating in a communicative process must view each other as equals despite their position in society, and that their interaction should lead to transformation as well as social change. Following his ontological and epistemological assumptions about dialogue, Freire was in first place influenced by Martin Buber's "Between Man and Man" which treats 'I-Thou' and 'I-IT' relationships as well as Socrates' 'maieutics', which is, the method of bringing to concertising the others thoughts. With respect to the latter, Morrow and Torres (2002), argue that the Freire's method is different from Socrates' 'maieutics' in rejecting "Socratic intellectualism" as anti-empirical. Freire argues that in a dialogical process it is not what one knows, but the level of one's intellect, information, and conduct. In other words, knowing and understanding the challenges that people face. This is done for the purpose of building common ground and ensuring that the communication process is on par (Morrow & Torres, 2002:118).

However, this theory has been criticised because, to some extent, it is utopian, and it is abstract when it comes to providing a full analysis of the way in which communication should be conducted. But the crucial point for Freire is the use of critical consciousness (by adult learners) to challenge any imposition of ideas (Marrow & Torres, 2002: 118).

Even though criticised by certain scholars, such criticism does not extend to the context of participation in ward meetings, where ward committees and their constituents need to treat students as co-creators of knowledge aimed at transforming the world in which they live. In furtherance, the study applied Freire's notion of dialogical praxis given its applicability in explicating the nature of interaction with a participatory process followed by ward councillor's citizens during ward meetings. This is because Freire's theory is viewed from the assumption that human beings cannot be silent observers (i.e., I-IT) during public meetings conducted with the aim of changing their lives, instead, each individual should be perceived as an equal subject in the development process (i.e., I-Thou).

In other words, participation in any development process (e.g., ward meetings) should lead to praxis through the interaction and involvement of all equal subjects. The emphasis is placed on three main concepts that guide the interaction between ward committees and local citizens, namely, participation, dialogue, and empowerment. Consequently, dialogue cannot exist unless those involved in it are not empowered to apply critical thinking so as to measure whether the participatory process they are involved in is not laced with manipulative and coercive intentions, especially on the part of those who have the authoritative power over the development process. Furthermore, the presentation of issues of the dialogue must seek to question the real-life situation involving the ward committee and their constituents. In the case of this research, it entails the experience of the community or residents who know the challenges of being excluded from the convention meant to empower them (Freire, 1993:88; Molale, 2019; Shih, 2018:64).

Even though Freire's writings are based on the Brazilian and Chilean contexts (Shih, 2018:68), The challenges identified are primarily based on developing countries, and thus, the findings are applicable to the African context. Freire's writings are based on the concept of liberating through education and critical pedagogy is also about the recognition that human life is conditioned to a larger social order as part of a just society. In light of the above discussion the following theoretical statement can be offered:

Ward meetings between ward committees and their constituents in Matlosana Local Municipality should, in line with Freire's dialogical praxis approach, be conducted in a manner that allows for all attendees to apply their critical consciousness to contribute ideas freely, and in an equal manner, through dialogue so as to jointly transform the world in which they live through participatory communication.

1.8 Research Methodology

The research study applied a qualitative research methodology to determine the nature of participatory communication in ward 12 community meetings. Qualitative methodology was useful as it is a scientific way of research wherein data is collected in an attempt to develop an understanding of what is being studied (Maree, 2007: 50).

In ensuring that the study achieved its intended goal of exploring how participatory communication is practiced during municipal ward meetings of ward 12 in Jouberton, the research methodology focused on the way in which individuals and groups (ward 12 residents) view, understand and construct meaning from the world based on their experiences. The researcher used qualitative methodology to further understand social and cultural underpinnings which underlie the different behavioural patterns focusing on exploring the “why” questions of the study. The study is cross-sectional in nature (Maree, 2007: 51).

This line of thought is aligned with the constructivist paradigm as the study is structured along the strength of first-hand experience (Tracy, 2013). The methodology allows the researcher to put him or herself in the shoes of the research subjects with the aim of discovering and understanding the underlying motives of human behaviour during the ward. The research is based on the reason for the community’s behaviour (why they resort to sometimes violent protests) with a purpose of understanding the nature of participatory communication during these meetings in ward 12 of Jouberton (Kothari, 2004:3).

Since a qualitative research methodology is applied to guide this study, it allowed the researcher to personally interact with those involved. In its nature, this methodology employs various kinds of non-numerical data such as interviews (Relmer & Gregg, 2011:59).

Moreover, this approach relies on the fact that the subjects under investigation are human beings; the interaction provided a unique window into their thoughts. It is through such interaction that the researcher was allowed an opportunity to immerse in the experiences of those involved during the meetings in ward 12. Additionally, this research approach allowed the researcher an opportunity to revisit either the original notes from the field in order to verify conclusions, or to collect additional data. Naturally, this occurs if there is a need to verify the data, or if gaps are identified in the collected data, particularly during data analysis.

1.8.1 Research Design

The research design is a framework where an investigation is executed. The design is important as it outlines how data was collected. This includes all resources involved in execution of the research.

The study was conducted in ward 12 in the Jouberton Township which falls under Matlosana Municipality in the North-West Province. Ward 12 in Jouberton is divided into three sub-sections, namely extension 17, 22, and 24. The councillor normally conducts three meetings a month to cater for the entire population in the area: one meeting is held every month with at least 70 to 100 community members per sub-section in attendance.

In the case of this research study, the researcher attended all three meetings over a two-month period; that is, two meetings per sub-section in total before data was analysed.

1.8.2 Population

In the context of research, population refers to a set of research objects and subjects from whom a sample of preferred units of analysis will be sought (Kothari, 2004: 43). In the context of the present study, population refers to all members of Matlosana Local Municipality. In order to further justify the study's sampling technique, about five hundred residents of Matlosana's ward 12 (which is the focus of the present study) also form part of the population.

1.8.2.1 Sampling (Participants in the Study)

Cormack (2000:51) regards sampling as a method that consists of small group of participants from a defined population. In the case this research study, the whole of ward 12 in Jouberton is regarded as the sample. All members of the community were included. The municipal mayor/speaker, IDP manager, ward councillor and committee members were not excluded. Sampling afforded the researcher an opportunity to minimise the risk of favouritism and partiality when collecting data. It also assisted in suggesting ways of drawing "scientific" samples that are random and representative of the population and whose findings informed the researcher about the population in general (Maree, 2007:172).

- **Purposive Sampling**

For the purpose of this study, purposive or judgemental sampling was used. This enabled the researcher to use his/her knowledge and judgment to select some groups to make sure that certain individuals who display certain attributes are included as part of the study (Berg, 2001:

33). This type of sampling was useful when the students constructs a historical reality, describes a phenomenon, or develops something about which the community, ward councillor, and ward committee members know little or take for granted (Kumar, 2011: 189).

After consent was attained from the gatekeepers (i.e., municipal mayor/speaker or municipal manager) the researcher conducted interviews in a form of semi-structured interviews with the ward councillor and three ward committee members (this is where N=3). For focus group interviews, 23 community members participated in this study. There were two groups which comprised eight members and one group which comprised seven members. All these participants were selected according to their relevance to the study. For instance, the three ward committee members are responsible for facilitating community discussions with the ward councillor regarding issues of infrastructure, transversal issues, and economic developments. Whereas, the mayor or council speaker, public participation/IDP manager, and ward councillor are representatives of the municipality responsible for political and administrative oversight. Ward committee members and residents represent the marginal voices when it comes to power dynamics.

Moreover, due to the fact that the researcher is a resident of ward 12 in Matlosana municipality and, has through the purposive sampling technique, recruited community members residing in the same area based on the criteria that they are supposed to take part in monthly ward meetings that are called by the ward committee members and ward councillor. Practically, the researcher adopted two acceptable strategies of recruiting community members for focus group interviews; namely, on-site recruitment as well as relying on community leaders to facilitate the identification of community members suitable for the study (see Dhanani et al, 2002). Through on-site recruitment, the researcher attended ward meetings and identified potential respondents for focus group interview discussions and subsequently invited them to participate in the study. Additionally, community leaders (ward councillor and committee members) were also requested to assist in identifying potential respondents as a way of establishing rapport with community members.

In sampling, it is important to consider the size of the sample. Therefore, a minimum of eight members from each of the three areas was preferred for the participation in focus group interview discussions for extension 22 (8 participants), extension 17 (7), and extension 24 (8). The data collection was conducted up to the point of saturation, thus a total number of respondents was 26 people (23 focus group interview discussants and 3 semi-structured interviewees).

1.9 Data Collection

1.9.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

These interviews are a flexible way of interviewing which allows both the interviewer and the interviewee to relate and understand each other especially during the meeting (Holland & Campbell, 2005:37). They are usually used in research projects to corroborate data coming from other data sources; hence this method is chosen for the study. As such, three interviews were used to gather the relevant data that will assist in determining the nature of communication between officials (see sampling procedure in 1.8.2.1 above for details of who was to participate in semi-structured interviews). Interviews were conducted, and during these interviews, the research participants were given adequate time to fully express themselves in order to be understood and state their point of view. Data was collected up to the point of saturation.

1.9.2 Focus-Group Interviews

This form of interview yields data rich in details which is sometimes hard to obtain directly from individual participants. During this process the researcher was attentive of the process that unfolded during the interview. A group of community members were asked questions without arguing about the answers generated (Niewenhuis, 2007: 90).

All in all, 23 members of the community from each of the three areas (extensions) were recruited for voluntary participation during interview discussions. Three focus group interview discussions were conducted with the groups that constituted of a representative sample comprising of adult males, females, as well as young people who are deemed relevant to participate in the study. These interviews are designed to elicit perceptions participants possesses as members of the communities at ward 12. The participants are informed and have experience of the setting as it is the area in which they live. Again, data was conducted up to the point of saturation.

1.10 Data Analysis

The analysis of data in a qualitative study primarily depends on the format in which a researcher plans to communicate their findings. Broadly, there are three ways to write about findings in this qualitative research: firstly, it is through developing a narrative to describe a situation, episode, event, or instance. Secondly, it is through identifying the main themes that emerge from field notes or transcription during the interviews and quoting extensively in verbatim format. Finally, it is through quantifying the main themes in order to provide their prevalence and thus their significance through content analysis. In this way, the researcher was able to analyse the

contents of interviews or observational field notes in order to identify the main themes that emerged from the responses given by the respondents, or the observation notes made by the researcher. According to Kumar (2011: 248), this process involved the following four steps:

1. Identifying the main themes
2. Assigning codes to the main themes
3. Classifying responses under the main themes; and,
4. Integrating themes and responses into the report.

1.11 Limitations of the Study

Limitations that could affect the study include bias. Although the student is from the same community where the study was conducted, there is a potential for bias in the research process. However, granted that this is a qualitative study, the researcher's bias and personal experience of the area (and community) was helpful in the data collection and analysis process. Niewenhuis (2007) also confirms that the researcher's subjectivity is acceptable and helpful in qualitative studies mainly because the researcher can also become a useful research instrument, thereby enhancing the data collection and analysis process.

1.12 Ethical Considerations

Academic research requires distinct adherence to professional and moral codes to guide the conduct of all researchers. Consequently, research ethics are important, insofar as providing prescriptions for researchers, including protecting the dignity of their research subjects at all costs (Akaranga & Makau, 2016:2). Therefore, the research study used various methods which ensured the anonymity and confidentiality of all participants during all stages of the research process. Participation in this study was strictly voluntary and the gatekeepers were approached at the beginning where written consent was sought from them. Although the study does not pose any risk to the earmarked participants, and the researcher does not expect any harm to be suffered by any respondent, the researcher ensured that they are all aware that if, at any stage of the research, any participant felt any level of discomfort, they were welcome to withdraw from the study. Additionally, since the research was focussing on the nature of the participatory communication in ward meetings, research participants were not asked to discuss any sensitive issues/information (i.e., such as revealing their political affiliation, etc.).

1.13 Chapter Outline

| | |
|-----------|--|
| Chapter 1 | This chapter provides a brief summary of the introduction and background of participatory communication and communication at ward meetings, the problem statement, and the objectives. |
| Chapter 2 | The second chapter presents a review of the relevant literature wherein the first research questions are answered. This comprises of an investigation into the most important premises of the participatory communication approach and the nature of participatory communication between local government and communities. |
| Chapter 3 | Chapter three discusses the methods used by the study. An explanation of the methods employed to collect data from different sources is presented. Such methods include focus-group interviews and semi-structured interviews. |
| Chapter 4 | The results that came out from the data collection during the semi-structured interviews and content analysis are interpreted and discussed in chapter four. |
| Chapter 5 | This last one, chapter five draws conclusions based on the results yielded in previous Chapter 4. Adding on that the general research question was answered, and more conclusions are drawn. The chapter identifies the shortcomings of the study, as well as future areas of research that arose from Chapters 2 and 4. |

1.14 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the main research problem, focusing on the main research question, specific questions, research aim, as well as its research objectives. It presented the underlying theoretical foundation, rooted in Paulo Freire's dialogical praxis and development communication. In summary it highlighted critical gaps regarding the nature of communication in the municipal ward meeting which occurs despite the introduction of ward committees and the facilitation of ward meetings. The chapter also outlined the study's methodological approach as well as its data collection and analysis strategy.

CHAPTER 2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK & LITERATURE REVIEW.

2.1 Introduction

In chapter one, the study's main research problem was discussed (see Section 1.2). The study's main research questions, specific questions, research aim as well as its research objectives were outlined (see Sections 1.3-1.3.1). This chapter also presented the underlying theoretical foundation, rooted in Paulo Freire's dialogical praxis and development communication (see Section 1.7.1). The previous chapter then outlined the study's methodological approach as well as its data collection and analysis strategy (see section 1.8) In a nutshell, it highlighted that there seems be critical gaps regarding the nature of communication in the municipal ward meeting. This is despite the introduction of ward committees and the facilitation of ward meetings. Municipalities in South Africa have experienced challenges related to public frustration and a lack of public trust as a result of community protests linked to a perceived shortage of services (Williams, 2006; Alexander et al 2018).

The present chapter focuses on responding to the first research question, namely:

- What, based on literature, are the implications of participatory communication as it relates to the nature of participation in ordinary ward meetings in the South African local government landscape?

This is achieved by an in-depth review of the literature both focusing on the literature on public participation in South Africa as a country as well as the literature on participatory communication using Freire's dialogical praxis and development communication as key theoretical anchors. This interrogation of the literature will help to answer the research question by gleaning and fleshing out key concepts and principles of participatory communication from the literature which will be used both inductively and deductively on the empirical side of the study when the collected data is analysed.

The primary contribution of the chapter is to address the gaps identified when studying participatory communication at local government within a South African context (cf. Thabanchu, 2011; Naidoo (2010); Msibi & Penzhorn (2010); William (2006); Mojapelo (2007); Loboera (2003) It further aims to contribute to the growing but nascent corpus of knowledge that deals with the participatory communication approach to development communication in South Africa's

public participation processes by linking this work with the theoretical underpinnings of Freire's dialogical praxis theory.

This chapter is structured five sections, it started with the introduction which focused on outlining what the first chapter entailed, and discussed the purpose of this study. In Section 2 the two theoretical approaches, namely: development communication and Paulo Freire's dialogical praxis are discussed to answer the first research question (see Section 1.4.1). This is done with the aim of building the argument about the challenges of participatory communication and to also close the identified gaps of participatory communication at local government with the intention of contributing to the unexplored literature left by much research done that dealt with the participation in the context of development communication theory. Section 4 deals with basic principle of participatory development communication which is aimed at building the discussion based on the above-mentioned theories that are used to strengthen the study in order for it to achieve its purpose. This chapter concludes with a summary of the chapter.

2.2 Development Communication

Also known as "communication for development and social change" (Quebral 2006:101), can be explained as an "art and science of human communication applied to the speedy transformation of a country or people to alleviate poverty". It is based on the ideology that advocates for people to become leading actors and generators development in their own instead of just being mere recipients and spectators of external development intervention (c.f Manyozo, 2006). Nora Quebral from the Los Banos college of agriculture in the Philippines is credited with having coined the term 'development communication' in the 1950s (cf. Manyozo, 2006).

Historically, there are several theoretical definitions provided to index all the approaches used to describe the kind of work that favours the ways in which development programs are used to improve the livelihoods of citizens, particularly the so-called 'subaltern' members of society in rural villages or underprivileged communities (c.f Rogers, 1976; Quebral 2006). For instance, there are three common paradigms used to represent the transition of the field of development communication which can be used to summarise the rich corpus of knowledge on the subject that, arguably, spans for over a century (Manyozo, 2006).

For Rogers (1976), development communication can be described as the "study of social change brought about by communication research, theory, and technologies, with development understood as a participatory process for social change". Other scholars such as Manyozo (2006); Mefalopulos (2008); Servaes (2008) regard it as a sharing of knowledge with an aim of

reaching an agreement for action that considers the interest, needs, and capacity of all concerned, thus making it a social change process.

Interestingly, most studies inherently link development communication with the idea of citizen participation. This arguably happens because the explanation of the concept is based on the principle of social change which is aligned to development. For example, according to Boafo (2006), development communication is planned and a systematic application of communication processes which supports the goal of socio-economic development. While Otto and Fourie (2016:28), describe development communication as a process that gives attention to social development and is central to the concept of participation.

In light of the above perspectives, it is clear that development communication is not only about dissemination of an innovation or new ideas, but it is also about facilitating communication and interaction between development managers and grassroots communities so that the voices of the latter role-players can find expression when development interventions are implemented in their local areas (Molale, 2014; Molale, 2021).

Although we can arguably say that research around what we have come to know as development communication dates back to the 1920s (cf. Manyozo, 2006; 2012). Former U.S. president, Harry S. Truman can be credited as having proliferated what became a world-wide development trajectory that gave rise and prominence to the different approaches used to describe development communication on a micro (local and regional), meso (provincial and national) as well as macro (transnational and global) scales of development and social change. Through his speech following World War II, he acknowledged the importance of using communication to share development knowledge and advancement of the west, with the rest of the world. Especially targeting countries in the so-called developing or third world, which, in his view, were in dire need of venturing on a new path that was centred on industrial development, globalisation and westernisation. In his speech which is considered to have made a mark in the beginning of a modern conception of development 'The Truman Doctrine', he ensured that there is an increase in the debate and work around the concept with different perspective because of its need is, amongst the top priorities in the local and international politics agenda for social change (Schramm 1989:9; Melkote & Steeves, 2001: 92).

The Truman Doctrine's origin was shaped by Childers (1968). He argued that the doctrine was used to address the obstacles to successful development programmes that emanated due to a lack of economic cause and lack of communication among beneficiaries and decision-makers in most development programmes around the world (Mefalopulos; 2008:56; Childers 1968, Hernández-Ramos & Schramm, 1989:9).

From the 40s to the 60s, research in development communication can be indexed under what has been commonly referenced as the modernisation paradigm. Where different theoretical perspectives, which, at times, straddled across interdisciplinary fields, have been offered with the intention of contemplating how it can be used as a pathway towards social development and change by means of modernising countries, communities, and people in the so-called third world (Tacchi, 2014: 3; Otto & Fourie, 2016: 25). The body of work that is linked to the modernisation paradigm can be referenced around the 'Bretton Woods' school of thought (cf. Molale, 2021). The name of this school of thought was conceived following the so-called Bretton Wood institutions, such as the International Bank for Development and Reconstruction/World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Manyozo, 2006: 80; Melkote, 2006).

However, from the 1960s, there was a growing body of knowledge that critically reflected on the failures of approaches that are linked to modernisation, whose criticism was based on the dependency that was inherently caused as a result of failures of unfulfilled promises that came with development programmes under the modernisation paradigm. These criticisms emanated largely from Latin America, which were indexed under what we can largely describe as the dependency paradigm of development communication within the Latin American school of thought (cf. Molale, 2021). From the 1970s, it can be argued that there was a need for what some Latin American scholars, such as Escobar (1995), called an "alternative to development." This is where they argued that there was a need for a new paradigm that focused on the participation of local citizens in development programmes as a way of countering the dependency that was identified following the failures of the modernisation paradigm (c.f. Fejes, 1980; Moemeka, 1998; Nyamnjoh 2015). This gave rise to the participatory communication paradigm, linked to the post-Freire school of thought (cf. Servaes & Malikhao, 2005; Molale, 2021). Through the latter paradigm, development communication can be linked to Paulo Freire's dialogical praxis as they both reinforce the effectiveness of dialogue as a form of 'genuine discourse' (cf. Jenlink & Banathy, 2005) which is hinged on two-way communication and interaction aimed at empowering local communities and beneficiaries of development programmes (Otto & Fourie, 2016: 25; Molale & Fourie, 2022).

While Jacobson and Servaes (1999: 2) saw development communication as being a dialogical process; Melkote and Steeves (2001:34, 37) refers to it as a social relations process with an aim of empowering individuals via a collective empowerment mode. Amidst these nuanced interpretations, it is arguable that development communication is largely aimed at creating some form of exchange, based on the formation and maintenance of mutually beneficial relationships between role-players in social change and development, with the objective of bringing agreed upon development programmes in local communities (Zaaiman, 2007:373).

In light of the foregoing, the following section deals with a historical overview of the three dominant paradigms of development communication. It should be noted that these paradigms are treated chronologically based on how research into them shaped the transition and evolution of development communication based on a paradigm shift from modernisation to dependency and ultimately to participatory communication.

2.2.1 The Evolution and Paradigm Shifts within the field of Development Communication

As argued in section 2.2 above, development was, since the 1940s, carried out as a solution that will improve the living conditions of poor people in the so-called third world, or what is now commonly known as the Global South. In this epoch, development inherently meant modernisation through the global proliferation of international development efforts with a principle of diffusing development success stories of the west to poor regions of the Global South (Melkote & Steeves, 2015). By the 1960s research focus turned to what can be summarised as the dependency paradigm. Research within this paradigm, mainly stemming from Latin America, presented critical arguments that were used to expose failures of modernisation (cf. Rogers: 1976; Frank, 1971; Nhema, 2016). From the 1970s onwards, we can locate much research conducted under the participatory paradigm. In the following three bullet sub-headings, the paradigms are discussed in detail.

- **Modernisation Paradigm.**

Modernisation is also referred to as the 'dominant paradigm' (Melkote, 2006: 111). It has shaped the thinking and practice in the scholarly work around development, including development communication theory and its practice. The concept with its paradigms has been explored in different dimensions from the United States, Latin America, the European industrial revolution, in Asia and Africa (c.f Wallerstein, 2017). In fact, in the 1950s a single, stationary, and a concise coining of the modernisation paradigm was hard to find until Everett Rogers in the 1970s distilled the main elements of the model of development (c.f. Melkote, 2006:2; Rogers, 1976). The historical context of the term 'modernisation' stems from events surrounding the Industrial Revolution, which happened in Europe in the eighteenth century, resulted in the political and economic advancement of European societies (c.f Melkote, 2006).

Accordingly in this context, modernisation means the process where developing countries attain the political and economic accomplishments of the West following Second World War. In this regard, the United States was already a dominant power across the globe and it used its influence to seek buy-in from other first-world countries to agree to establish the Bretton Woods

Institutions that would be used to reconstruct and transform the undeveloped states. Hence, after World War II, the USA assisted western Europe to rebuild, and this made America a centre of the world with the rest on the periphery (Servaes, 2017:4; Naidoo, 2010:19).

Daniel Lerner (1958) in his renowned work, entitled *The Passing of Traditional Society*, advanced arguments that focused on promoting the idea that for communication to reach its desired goals and intended potential, it has to be reciprocal. The author further posits that the more emphatic an individual is, the more modernised they tend to be.

For many, the modernisation paradigm in its first decade was based on an economic thinking which was deeply rooted in a capitalist system (Kay, 2005). The concept of modernisation incorporates a transition (in terms of transformation) from a old way of doing things to a modern one, thus implying that poorer countries are undeveloped because of they embrace “primitive, barbaric and uncivilized” ways of life (Rogers, 1976; Kay, 2005; Manyozo, 2006; Melkote, 2006). It is about causing rural and culturally inclined community members in the Global South (such as those in Asia, Africa, South America, and India) to follow the West's path of development, the Global South has effectively been colonised in thought and deed, as opposed to finding their own way to modernise at their own pace. For instance, when approached from an agricultural context, the modernisation is based on encouraging farmers to explore new crops, new production methods, and new marketing skills (Ellis & Biggs, 2001) through diffusion of innovation (Rogers, 1976).

In general, the modernisation paradigm led to the introduction of hybrids, the greenhouse technologies, use of artificial fertilizers, insecticides, genetically modified food, tractors and the application of other scientific knowledge to replace traditional agricultural practices. Put differently, Rogers (1969) argued that modernisation was, “a process whereby individuals move from a traditional way of life to a more complex, technologically advanced, and rapidly changing style of life” (cf. Servaes, 2008:9; Matunhu, 2011:65). Rogers (1969) also highlighted that modernisation could not occur unless those who are deemed targets are convinced to change from their old ways of life and embrace modernity or modernisation. In this period, industrialisation was seen as the only route towards ensuring that development is realised in the developing world. This gave space for development planners through the introduction of, for instance, manufacturing industries to propose new industrial processes and investments for developing countries as a way of influencing economic growth, thus advancing and modernising those countries (Rogers, 1976).

The 1960s was the decade of development after developing countries were encouraged to put more efforts by investing in initiatives of industrialisation such as diversity of manufacturing units

and steel industries. Thus, imitating the then world order of developed countries in Europe and North America, as part of the plan by these developed nations, through their Bretton Woods Institutions (The World Bank, IMF, and the United Nations) to ensure economic growth, and introduce technologies as a new and only ways of life for the developing nations. This meant that the Bretton Woods agencies, in particular the World Bank, were tasked with facilitating loans for development and aid for these countries. In those ten years, the focus was solely on the technological transfers from the North to the Global South with the aim to change the lives of those in poorer regions (Melkote, 2006: 112).

However, scholars such as Escobar (1995) held a different view despite these positive expectations and ambitions, for some developing countries were plunged into extreme poverty and underdevelopment. The promises that were made by modernisation proponents did not materialise, thus fuelling scholarship, mainly from Latin America, on the dependency paradigm. Escobar argued that modernisation brought with it an increase of promises; he regarded it as the total opposite of what it was promised to be when it came. This led to its demise which was celebrated by the introduction of the dependency paradigm, which criticised it. Over and above that, the latter was seen as being based in a capitalist system, which in its nature is unfair to the less fortunate, Africa being an example. Escobar's posture on modernisation is also shown in Zimbudzana's (2011) work, which criticises modernisation by saying it made Africa poorer through imperialism and colonialism. He sees it as a failure which encourages and enhances supremacy which Africa is struggling to get rid-off. Through modernisation some developing countries remained undeveloped; this came across as being a deliberate act by the super-powers who used the Bretton Woods Institutions. These institutions are seen as a way in which super-powers could maintain power over developing countries (Igwe, 2018). However, the need for development has always existed, (Manyozo 2008).

This implies that Bretton Woods Institutions could only 'help' developing countries by providing them with loans which were used to plunge them deeper and deeper in debt with the promise of helping them to realise the dream of being as industrialised as their western and European counterpart. This, however, created a dependency for developing countries to always rely on requesting more loans and rely on their western and European colonisers (Manyozo, 2006; Rogers, 1976: 215; Adhikarya, 1979; Escobar 1995).

The proposed changes, especially the introduction of industrialisation in the eyes of other scholars, especially those from the Latin American school of thought, had its shortcoming. It meant that at the heart of industrialisation lied technology and maximised capital, which would have a negative impact and is a substitute for labour. This synthesis was derived from the

lesson of the Industrial Revolution in Western Europe and North America (cf. Molale, 2021, Melkote, 2006, Rogers, 1976).

During the early 1960s the modernisation paradigm through the Passing of Traditional Society ventured into some form of revisionism owing to the criticism it has attracted, predominantly from the Latin American school of thought. These scholars included Eisenstadt (1976), Boyd-Barrett (1976), Fejes (1980), Moemeka (1998), Banuri (2014), and Nyamnjoh (2015), just to mention a few.

By the late 1970s and after the world witnessed a paradigm shift in development communication research from the modernisation paradigm to the dependency paradigm. The dependency paradigm was hinged on a criticism against the dominant paradigm, largely on two fronts: the first was on the basis that modernisation and the Bretton Woods Institutions plunged developing countries deeper and deeper into financial crisis and debt which they could not pay back, and secondly, from the perspective that the move from traditional ways of life towards the embrace of modern cultures from the West effectively meant that the rural and poor citizens in the developing world were forced to shun their cultural and indigenous ways life. This erodes their cultural identity at the behest of their imperial and colonial masters (cf. Molale, 2021). The dependency paradigm is discussed in the following sub-section.

- **Dependency Paradigm**

With its links to modernisation, the dependency paradigm was also a strong opposition in the 1960s to the dominant paradigm. It ushered an alternative line of thought in development communication literature, rooted in a political-economic perspective that was Marxist-leaning, especially from Latin American scholars (Beltrán, 1967, Huesca, 2008; Mefalopolus, 2008). Proponents of the dependency paradigm critiqued the modernisation paradigm of implicitly emphasising the blame for the course of un-development upon the recipients, ignoring the historical, external, and also economic factors, including deliberate underdevelopment efforts by First-World countries through the Bretton Woods Institutions (Melkote & Steeves, 2015; Molale, 2021).

Another outstanding thorny issue was that the end of Second World War, and the supposed end to colonialism did not only come with relief and change, instead, there were increased financial reliance of poorer nations on their rich Western and European colonial masters due to intensive introduction of international development and the new world order that was hinged in industrialisation and economic growth (Melkote & Steeves, 2015; Manyozo, 2012). This was a fundamental argument behind the dependency paradigm.

Arguably, scholars and proponents of the dependency paradigm were aligned to the Marxist theoretical approach which was the fundamental basis upon which their critique against the dominant paradigm was hinged. Their argument was about the point that the persistent poverty and famine in developing nations, such as Ethiopia, for instance, was as a direct consequence of capitalist exploitation, due to the change of the international economy into division of labour which favoured the rich over the poor (Naidoo, 2010: 26; Molale, 2021).

Like other scholars, Molale (2021) observed that despite its good intentions, modernisation created a form of dependency by developing countries on the rich nations. Thus, making it difficult for genuine development to occur (cf. Molale, 2019; Mefalopulos, 2008 Giddens & Pierson, 1998; Moemeka, 1999; Banuri, 2014 Nyamnjoh, 2015).

This paradigm emphasises the importance of culture, advocating for equitable and balanced exchange of communication, information, and cultural programmes amongst the undeveloped and developed nations. Such an approach made the paradigm gain popularity in the early 1970s, even though this was short-lived. It began gradually to lose relevance due to the failure of not producing alternative economic models by its proponents (Servaes, 2008:17; Park & Pooley 2008; Mefalopulos, 2008:6; Sylvester, 2016: 321).

The dependency approach was also criticised for failing to propose for more agency to beneficiaries of development programmes. This is where communities should be granted the space to participate in decision-making processes in development programmes. Furthermore, it was criticised for following too much of a top-down process, and for only criticising the modernisation approach but not proffering alternatives that could provide remedies to the status quo (cf. Jacobson & Servaes, 1999).

This criticism resulted in a coordinated effort by scholars, particularly those from developing countries, to seek an alternative paradigm named the participatory communication approach. The term 'participation' was then proposed initially in response to the challenges of earlier approaches as a coherent and moral model for social change (Huesca, 2002; Wilkins, 2009).

- **Participatory Paradigm**

The third approach of development is the participatory paradigm, which Sylvester (2016) described as a product of participation and collaboration of stakeholders with communication regarded as an important tool for participation. As a concept, it holds that true development is considering the need for a form of reciprocal communication utilising the participation as an integral element of communication, which is characterised by a two-way communication

process, facilitation of feedback, and collaboration, dialogue (i.e., genuine discourse, cf. Jenlink & Banathy, 2005) and intersubjectivity (Molale & Fourie, 2022).

By the 1970s interest in participatory paradigm grew in the development literature, it was hard to continue as it became hard to support ideas of dependency paradigm at that time. This is because some scholars viewed the dependency as a paradigm that minimises the ability of local groups to engage in decision making (Jacobson & Servaes, 1999; Mefalopulos, 2008; Sylvester 2005). Beyond merely critiquing modernisation from the perspective of undeveloped countries, the participatory approach heralded an era where the role of beneficiaries needed to be scrutinised and emphasised (Mtshali, 2016; Maredi, 2016; Josua, 2017; Molale, 2019). The following questions became central to the study of the participatory communication approach: Who was involved in development programmes? How are citizens' voices facilitated? How the marginalised are accommodated? How are policies developed, and who takes part in the decision-making process? At the centre of these questions lies the quest for active citizen participation of marginalised citizens in developing countries. Such questions have gained resonance at local municipal level in South Africa (cf. Molale, 2021).

The participatory communication approach emanated from the South American school of thought and was hinged upon Paulo Freire's (1973) substantive works, including his popular and influential treatise entitled *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, also known as liberation pedagogy. Freire's work was followed by academic works of British's development researcher Chambers (1983) and Colombian development scholar, Arturo Escobar (1995), who were inspired by the ideas of ordinary people also taking part in any development meant for them and this is reflective in their scholarly work about people's participation in social change and development initiatives.

Equally, with the advent of the participatory approach, there was an increasing recognition that the old, vertical, top-down model of development (hinged on the modernisation paradigm) is no longer applicable as a panacea for addressing development problems experienced in local communities. While acknowledging that the basic principles behind the Sender-Message-Channel-Receiver model of communication (that is generally applied in line with the modernisation paradigm), can still be useful in some development cases, development communication has, within the context of participatory communication, increasingly moved toward a more horizontal, two-way communication model which favours the active participation of local citizens through consultation and dialogue (Mefalopulos, 2008:7; Molale, 2021).

According to Mefalopulos (2008), the participatory paradigm changed the way communication is conceived and applied within the context of development and social change programmes in

international development. It represents a paradigm shift from strategic and instrumental action, rooted in among others, the diffusion of innovation, persuasion, and information dissemination to a more horizontal communication approach, rooted in joint decision-making, joint-collaboration and participation in all development programmes and processes. Rather than substituting the old dominant paradigm, participatory communication broadens the scope of interactions and maintains the key functions of information sharing towards the promotion of active citizen engagement in social change, while at the same time, it emphasises the importance of using communication and dialogue to involve all role-players in all development process and levels (Mefalopulos 2000:7; Molale, 2019; Molale & Fourie, 2022, Tufte & Mefalopulos, 2009).

The outcomes of participatory paradigm have been hailed because they strive to maximise the voice of local development programme beneficiaries in key decision-making processes. Empowerment, dialogue, and participation are essential when it comes to participatory communication (cf. Servaes & Malikhao, 2005).

However, Ang and Dalmia (2000) raised possible concerns that the participatory paradigm is not as perfect as many believe it to be. They argue that just like others it is prone to be abused, stating that as much as abuse takes place in a top-down approach, abuses could also take place from a bottom-up approach. While Mefalopulos (2008) points out that those scholars supporting this paradigm are more focused on identifying and analysing drawbacks and limitation of development projects instead of defining a grand theoretical prospect of the participatory paradigm and use them to rescue the participatory paradigm from its related major criticisms, including the fact that it is idealistic, impractical, and utopian (cf. Molale, 2021; Otto & Fourie, 2016)

Notwithstanding, the participatory paradigm is reciprocal communication and is regarded as a basic human need and right. This means it carries with it the notion of empowerment to bring about profound change in society. It is characterised by need-oriented, self-reliance, structural transformation, and participatory democracy. As eluded, those development problems are complex. In the participatory paradigm, no pathway is seen as the best. In line with the participatory approach, it is believed that every society needs to find its way for a better life through finding means that will make reciprocal communication work to allow the consideration of others (Liao, 2006:109; Servaes, 2016).

In conclusion, participation which means something and has a positive impact in the lives of many cannot exist without communication. Unfortunately, this is overlooked at by many development programmes, including community-driven ones, they paying attention to participation, they do not pay attention the same way to communication which was intended as

the professional use of dialogic methods and tools to promote change (Mefalopoulos, 2008:7). Meaningful participation must be based on the genuine two-way communication practice; hence, communication is regarded as important when comes to development especially in this context.

Through many scholarly works, communication is more than just an instrument for persuasion and individual behaviour change; it is a process of empowerment and democratisation. Although the top-down approach for behavioural change prevailed, participatory communication has become the new “buzzword” and relevant, if not the new paradigm, at the turn of the millennium. It was in part based on the revival of the Latin American strand of participatory theory and practice, which had a strong influence on the critical social science of the 1970s. A key scholar and source of inspiration was the Brazilian Paulo Freire, with his focus on ‘conscientization’, revolutionary pedagogical practices and dialogic communication (c.f. Freire 1970).

2.3 Freire’s Dialogical Praxis

In his theory, Freire’s (1993) identified that “dehumanisation, which marks not only those whose humanity has been stolen but also those who have stolen it,” in essence people should be treated as equal no matter the position they assume. He regards this as a “distortion of the vocation of becoming more fully human.” Paulo Reglus Neves Freire (1921-1997) is one of the most revered iconic people in contemporary literature of education. His work has also been credited. He firmly believed in promoting the relationship between teachers and adult learners as co-creators of knowledge. This approach placed emphasis on dialogue as genuine discourse, where interlocutors (in his case, teachers and adult learners) use dialogue to transform the conventional top-down and skewed power relationships that are common in classrooms, by engaging in intersubjectively and equal reciprocation of knowledge (cf. Freire, 1993; Breunig, 2010; Molale, 2021).

Freire (1985) believed in conceptualising this social context with the hope of awakening the critical consciousness of the oppressed, in this case adult learners. He believed that adult learners could change from being passive participators of the classroom context into becoming key actors who could use their indigenous knowledge and personal experiences to shape the teaching and learning process. His predisposition with these views were largely influenced by the writings of the Catholic priest, Martin Buber, who, through a classic treatise titled *Between Man and Man*, conceptualised the I-It and I-Thou contrasts based on how to measure meaningful relationship, or those that are parasitic looking at the value and transactional benefits people get from relating with one another. Buber explains the concept through the

analogy of relationship, I-Thou is a dialogue where mutual respect is key to the community, while I-It is the opposite where the relationship is based on a monologue with an element of detachment from the other's feeling. Further explaining that the relationship of the self and the other is about "relationship, communication and becoming" (Naidoo, 2010:4).

Freire's dialogical praxis has resonated with scholars and proponents of the participation in development communication. Centring on the use of critical consciousness by beneficiaries of development, as well as the facilitation of dialogue among all role-players concerned. Participatory communication further emphasises the relevance of cultural identity as well as the use of indigenous knowledge by local communities (Lumb & Roberts, 2017; Aitchison & McKay, 2021).

Other communication approaches in development, as mentioned above, point out the nature communication and regarded it as a linear and top-down communication approach. But Freire maintained his believe that any form of knowledge sharing meant to bring about change can never be from just one point (authority) to the other (receiver). A participatory model based on Freire's liberation pedagogy from the 1960s is critical. This thinking will assist not only in bringing change on the approach of communication, but to bring renewed forms in development, and 'reciprocal reforms' in the field. These will determine the strategic communication objectives, rather than communicating in a dictatorial manner. The centre of attention should include the empowerment of those whom the changes are meant for by their active involvement, creating solutions, and implementation of strategies. The participation model is a dialogical approach to communication (Tufté & Mefalopulos, 209:7; Freire, 1993).

Freire (1973) offered the concept of liberating education that was used to conceptualise participatory communication. For example, Huesca (2002), supported the idea of dialogical praxis within the context of participatory communication in development projects by asserting that in a praxis approach to teaching, people serve as their own examples in the struggle to improve their lives.

According to Servaes (1996) participation means a higher public inclusion in a communication system. This involves the inclusion of the communities in the production process, the authorities, and the planning of the communication system. With that being said, Freire's (1970) reflection on society through his theory is criticised by Servaes (1996) who argues that Freire pays small attention to language or rather a form of communication in devoting his discussion to the intention of communication. The author further argues that Freire's (1970) theory of dialogical praxis is not based on mass media but a group dialogue. However, it can be counter-argued that such a perspective fails to acknowledge that Freire's work (1970; 1983) involves the

ideas of access, participation and self-management articulated in the UNESCO debates of the 1970s. He highlights that every communication project which calls itself participatory must be in line with the principles of democracy in the context of communication.

Notwithstanding, Freire's (1970) work can be appropriated in the context of participatory communication in local government, where his perspective, just like in the classroom context, can be used to demonstrate the nature of participatory communication needed in ward meetings. It should be noted that his dialogical praxis approach requires a specific approach to understanding human beings and the social world, from which general principles for equality, participation, dialogue, and empowerment should be explored. For Freire, pedagogy can be humanising only when it is critical, and dialogical. Further, dialogic pedagogy is an actual praxis of a democracy (Shih, 2018:230).

Even though his writing and influences are based on Brazilian and Chilean contexts, the development-related challenges experienced in those countries are similar to any developing nation, even in Africa and South Africa specifically. An outstanding point that needs to be stressed is how Freire's (1970) dialogical praxis highlights that dialogue as a form of empowerment. Similarly, Chikozho (2013) argues that dialogue and empowerment are based on any participatory communication paradigm which facilitates the balance exchange of knowledge which leads to creation of new discoveries.

In the same breath, Smith (2011:515) argued that although public participation at the local level has been formalised through the rote mechanisms of Integrated Development Plans (IDP) and ward committees as dictated by the legislation, in the absence of recourse from the public when local government does not meet legislated standards, such participatory engagement fails to build layers of accountability. These legislated forms of public participation lack enforcement of procedural equity and are thus supporting what Freire tried to avoid, being aware of the problem but coming up with methods that sometimes cause damage and don't achieve the intended purpose. It is therefore necessary that communities organise themselves into civic bodies that can represent their interests at local government level. More importantly, perhaps, in historically marginalised sections of society, communities should revisit their richly textured experiences of organisation and mobilisation against the apartheid state and adapt such strategic forms of engagement and dialogue to empower citizens at the grassroots level.

Influenced by Freire's philosophy, some scholars continue to support the thought that dialogue as a phenomenon is important in ensuring that a systematic distribution of opportunity is indeed imperative because it's based on the notion of persuasion which is derived from practical dialogue (c.f. Mefalopoulos 2008; Quarry & Ramirez 2009).

In this praxis, people who are dominated must be treated as full human subjects. Implying that they must be involved in dialogue as active and not passive receivers of any communication action, as this will allow people to realise their goals. The base of the argument is that reciprocal communication, in its nature, befits those involved as opposed to communication in an authoritative manner which goes one direction (Mosonik, 2017:21).

Finally, it is important to draw the experience in the field of community participation to explore the thinking of Freire in development on how the negligent participatory communication ought to take place. As this special issue of the nature of communication is based on the foundational principle of participatory communication which has informed communication for social change. Especially according to Freirean principle which emphasises that the field of communication pursues community development, common ground, and linking groups together in pursuit of social justice, economic inclusion, and political participation for all (Jimenez-Martinez, 2020: 409).

This study will also use Freire's dialogical praxis. This theory emphasises the point that human beings are not built in silence, meaning they cannot be spectators. He regards participation in any development to mean praxis meant to transform the world. Communication is not a privilege for the few, but the right of everyone. In his dialogical praxis Freire further states that dialogue cannot exist unless interlocutors engage in critical thinking. The theory will be used to stress the importance of a reciprocal or a participatory communication (Freire, 1993:88).

2.4 Basic Principle of Participatory Development Communication

The Republic of South African government defines itself as a developmental state, and that means it has a developmental responsibility towards its citizens. It is therefore obvious that local government with community communication ought to be informed by the principles of participatory development communication (i.e., dialogue, participation, and empowerment). It is therefore argued in this study that communication during ward meetings should be based on the above-mentioned principles.

2.4.1 Dialogue

Dialogue is a two-way communication between two people exchanging meaningful messages to understand the context of their discussion. During dialogue people express their right to be active in the development initiated. Dialogue is a form of engagement that collaborates partnership between people and organisations, groups, and the public sector to mobilise resources and change relationships (Delcarme, 2000:2).

2.4.2 Community Participation

Participation is defined as a sum of actions taken by individuals in order to attempt to influence an outcome. It differs in intensity and extent and is regarded to as increasingly intensive as more people take part in it. It should be viewed as an evolutionary process that starts with planning and ends with operation (Fitzgerald, 1997:282–283).

2.4.3 Empowerment

It is the process by which people, organisations, and residents gain self-esteem, confidence, and power to articulate their concerns and take actions to address them. Empowered people are encouraged to play a role in changing their challenges which are negative to positive in order to benefit. The key to the empowerment of the communities is the unrestricted access to the information (Delcarne, 2000:03).

The rationale for community participation is that it facilitates learning, promotes responsibility through instilling confidence, assists with mobilisation, liberation, and knowledge sharing, and empowers the community. In this context, through studies conducted, there is considerable participation broadening participants' sense of self-interest, and this plays a important role in the process of collaborative decision making where those involved are forever striving to be better (Sofhani, 2006:137; Leboea, 2003).

Research around the concept of community participation dates back a long way, but in the context of South Africa it has become more interesting amidst an evolving post-apartheid era. Many scholars recognise that participation is an integral part in realising South Africa' constitutional commitment to its citizens; interest is forever growing. In the case of RSA, it has become tantamount with legitimate governance (c.f. William 2006; Meier, Pardue & London, 2012, Molale, 2014; Naidoo, 2010; Otto & Fourie, 2016).

Furthermore, many studies have spoken to the importance of community participation in matters that affect them. A lot of studies have been conducted regarding the concept of community participation; however, this section will focus on the last two decades.

Many studies have agreed with the point that participation does exist. The debates tend to be on whether participation is in a passive or active form and how that affects development. In Govender's (2006) work *Citizen Participation in the Budget Process in Local Government, a Case of eThekwin Municipality* aimed to assess the theoretical framework for citizens' participation and to evaluate the perception of councillors, civics, and ratepayer organisations on participation in the local budget of the municipality. This study revealed that there is some

form of effort when it comes to participation, but the problem lies with the executers, thus making implementation a problem. Furthermore, Naidoo (2010), conducted a study which was aimed at determining how communication of Thusong Service Centre compared with the normative principle of participatory development communication. His findings showed that dialogue is not employed by the GCIS in their development communication efforts with communities. The study went on to expose that communities were generally not involved in the entire development communication process, therefore, meaning that the efforts lacked the principle of empowerment that is usually warned about and remains at the centre of the problem when it comes to participation.

Interestingly, Molale (2014) took it further, focusing on the extent of participatory communication in the Integrated Development Planning in Matlosana Local Municipality. The study exclusively focused on specific community IDP meetings to study the extent of participatory communication during these meetings. However, general monthly meetings that are presided over by the councillor and ward committee members were not addressed in this research.

Naidoo's (2010), as well as Molale's (2014) dissertation are in the field of local government and public administration. They are significant and insightful studies that include a critical reflection on the nature and practice of modern-day public participation in local government. A study by Williams (2006), on the use of a multi-criteria decision analysis framework proposed by Scott (2005) and Leboea's (2003) observation surrounding the nature of community participation through ward systems. Leboea's (2003) study makes mention that amongst the challenges faced, is the role played by community members. The study places blame on the citizens, highlighting the point that they prefer to be passive or rather play a passive role during the communication process, omitting the fact that the legislature forces municipalities to take charge and create conditions that enable any engagement to be participatory.

In the same breath, another study which explored the community's view on participation, particularly through voting, is Mojapelo's (2007) study which found that a majority pointed to the importance of voting, which is participation. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of councillors, particularly as being the link between those involved during the ward meetings. The research revealed that during the IDP meetings, residents were given minimal time to express their needs while politicians were given more time to talk. It is also important to note that the research discovered that the same politicians who are given talking time, often do not report back on what was promised in previous encounters with the communities. Instead, these politicians always get new needs from communities (Mojapelo, 2007:107).

Madumo's (2011) study focused on exposing misconceptions about the expectations of the residents in terms of the roles and functions of ward meetings in facilitating public participation. The research investigated the challenges preventing the functioning of ward committees in municipalities from an administrative point of view. Moreover, aiming to evaluate the relevance and the effectiveness of ward committees in ensuring the involvement of the citizens in an instance where a municipality is in the process of formulating programmes that achieve effective and equitable service delivery. Jooste (2014) referred to the nature of participatory communication between stakeholders in 'bhive', which is a university incubator project that provided insightful perspectives and triggered a need to explore the nature of participatory communication in municipal ward committee systems. The study highlighted that there is always a need to improve, especially when dealing with communication that is meant to have an impact, particularly on the lives of individuals.

Another interesting study was of Ali (2017) who explores the perception and practice of participatory communication for development. This study exclusively focuses on a leading local Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) named "Organisation for Rehabilitation and Development in Amhara" (ORDA) in Ethiopia. This study is based on the participatory development communication model which has been assumed to bring about sustainable socio-economic change to a country. The study is based on the manner, in which participatory development communication is perceived and practiced in the Organisation for Rehabilitation and Development (Ali, 2017:244).

While on the other hand, Ako's (2017) study focused on municipal development communication administrators, staff members, or agencies who were responsible for designing and executing citizen engagement policies. This study particularly focused on the way these staff members responded to their respective communities and citizens' concerns. Furthermore, the study interrogated the participants' knowledge and perception of participatory development communication as defined during the interview sessions of the study. In this regard, the findings yielded both unanimous and divergent responses.

Msibi and Penzhorn (2010) also acknowledge that participatory communication can only come when all stakeholders (development planners and people involved) work together in the decision process, and this is headed by genuine dialogue. This is regarded to process of two-way communication where people's involvement in all stages is taken seriously and not rhetorically.

The nature of people being passive receivers of development in South Africa, in general, dates to the previous dispensation. The post-apartheid era as much as it brought change with it, it

also faces its own challenges. There is evident concrete experience of failure of projects and policy implementation that persist, and this has been uncovered by academia. But the South African governance model arguably defines the country as unitary state of government which has three spheres, national, provincial, and local. When talking about local it refers to municipalities, of which there are 284 in total. The South African government, through local government, endorses and acknowledges the importance of communication that is participatory and democratic in nature as an instrument for social change and sustainable development (Msibi & Penzhorn, 2010).

Genuine participatory communication still faces challenges, despite many reasons existing on the importance of involving local communities. Participation seems to be on its passive mode just as it had been in the previous dispensation. According to Leboea (2003:44), even though genuine participation is in the interest of all stakeholders, his studies discovered there is still resistance from community members who are still on their passive mode. In his study discovered that as much as the blame tends to point to authorities, there is more to it than that. But Naidoo's (2010) study found something different, and this is on the side of the authority. The study saw the problem lying with those in charge.

It may be concluded from the above discussion, ward meetings in Matlosana Local Municipality should, in line with the development communication principle and Freire's dialogical praxis approach, be conducted in a manner that allows for all attendees to apply their critical consciousness to contribute ideas freely, and in an equal manner, through dialogue to jointly transform the world in which they live through participatory communication.

With it being hailed highly by some scholars, other academics have observed that amongst the challenges of the real purpose of participatory communication is the non-existence or rather the loss of two-way-communication. In many cases it is side-lined and ignored in favour of linear communication. This post-development critique has affected participatory communication in legitimising development. Notwithstanding that there is evidence advocating that there is acknowledgement from existing development participatory communication theory that the existence of power limitation within development participatory discourse exist. Reviewing participation, Kothari (2004) deemed it tyranny of the development discourse mainly because of its tendency to reinforce the exclusion of the marginalised, neglect to enhance and to open channels for participation. Many case studies by researchers in the field identified that development participatory communication theory's apolitical representation of power promotes the dominance of multinational agencies and funders in participatory decision-making processes. This results in the manipulation of local knowledge. The outstanding critique of

participatory communication by other scholars who argued that participation ideals are often operationally constrained by institutional contexts that put formal bureaucratic goals first result in it failing before it even started. This leads to further marginalisation of the already disadvantaged communities who are stripped of a chance of bargaining. One of the challenges of development participatory communications is the power challenge (cf. Kothari, 2004; Chikozho, 2013).

2.5 Conclusion

Having outlined the study by answering the main research question, critically reviewing public participation in South African ward meetings and interrogating relevant literature with the aim of answering the other research questions a lot has been discovered regarding the realities of participatory communication. Chapter 2 has, amongst other things, emphasised the importance of the concept of participatory communication, i.e., dialogue, community participation, and empowerment. The above-mentioned concepts have not only been identified but has been conceptualised with the theories underpinning this study namely, development communication theory and Freire's dialogical praxis.

This chapter answered the main research: *What is the nature of participatory communication between ward councillors and the public in ward 12 in Jouberton at Matlosana Local Municipality?*

The main research question was answered through reviewing literature and exploring the two theories (see Sections 2.2 and 2.3). Development communication is about effective social change brought about by participation. It is based on sharing of knowledge aimed at reaching a reciprocal consensus; it is understood as a participatory process. This concept is inherently linked with participation (Servaes, 2008:1; Mefalopulos, 2008:43).

In responding the main research question, this chapter argues that the development communication paradigms (see Section 2.2) existed for a purpose in the context of understanding development communication and where power is vested during the communication process. In achieving its intended goal, the chapter identified all paradigms and detailed their evolution throughout the years.

Chapter 2 further argued that modernisation paradigm was very key in the road to understanding the importance of transition from the traditional way of doing things to a modern one. This changing character was deemed paramount; that is, out with the old way of doing things and in with the new one (Melkote, 2006:112; Matunhu, 2011:65; Lerner, 1958).

Development communication expanded further to include the dependency paradigm which referred to and was in close proximity to the dominant paradigm. This paradigm stressed that the blame of underdevelopment should not implicitly be put upon the recipient, ignoring external, historical, and economic factors. It emphasised the importance of a equitable and balanced exchange of information, communication, and cultural programmes. Lastly, the participatory paradigm which changed how communication was perceived and applied, emphasised that communication should move from persuasion to participation (Sylvester, 2016:321; Mefalopulos, 2008:6-7).

Dialogical praxis also was used to explore communicative action. It links well together with the development communication theory because both theories assisted in examining and identifying gaps left by other studies. The dialogical praxis led to the following realisation:

- The importance of dialogue as the foundation of participation which promotes empowerment.
- The chapter highlights that dialogue is an important for participation and, by implication, a prerequisite for authentic development. In the context of communication for development, the dialogical process has to do with a two-way flow of communication, which is different to the vertical, linear communication process.
- Freire, as an educational scholar, adjusted the concepts of education by emphasising that education is about awareness. His pedagogy changed from his encounter with poverty, exclusion, and exploitation in Brazil. This chapter also highlighted relevant important concepts namely, dialogue, empowerment, and conscientization. These concepts are important in the endeavour to develop grassroots communities.
- The importance two types of relationships: the I-It and I-Thou. The I-It encounter accepts and affirms the other and, through such acceptance, liberates and enhances both the *I*, who meets, and the *Thou*, who is met. While The I-Thou is the encounter of mutual respect, openness, dialogue (give and take one). It forms the basis for communion, which is, in turn, the key to community.

Contextually, the community/public or rather citizen participation should be viewed as a process which communicates the interest of those involved with local government viewed as responsible for the basic needs of its citizens. It is where the municipality creates platforms and facilitates governance to such an extent that all participating groups in their entirety are given a chance to present their needs. It is worth noting that it is acknowledged in the governance and

development discourse as a mechanism for building capacity for the marginalised in a quest for poverty alleviation. Public participation is a key ingredient in the recipe for democracy (Tau, 2013:154).

With that being said, there is evidence that although there is a lot of scholarly work done in the area of public or community participation on the one hand, and participatory communication on the other, there is yet to be a study that exclusively deals with the nature of participatory communication in the context of municipal ward meetings.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the study focused on answering the first specific research question (see Section 2.1) by critically paying attention in reviewing the literature on public participation in the context of South African ward meetings and in participatory communication. The aim was to identify key concepts of participatory communication that can help in enabling meaningful community participation.

The chapter also discussed theories upon which the study is grounded and further reviewed the literature surrounding the field of development communication. This was to address the geography and discipline gaps that have been identified as far as the scarcity of research conducted within the context of participatory communication at local government in the country (cf. Molale, 2021). The intention was to contribute to the growing scholarly interest in this domain by conceptualising participatory communication within the ward meeting system, an area that has scarcely been explored or approached from the perspective of development communication. This theory was linked together with Paulo Freire's dialogical praxis. The reasoning behind this is that both these theoretical approaches are complementary in that they also possess key concepts that are relevant when measuring the nature of citizen participation in democratic forums that are aimed at heralding local development and social change. They could assist in examining and identifying gaps left by other studies.

The present chapter discusses the study's methodological orientation together with the study's strategy for collection and analysis of empirical data (i.e., research design). The study's research design is centred on the use of a qualitative research approach which relates to the aim of the study (see Section 1.3), which is to explore the nature of participatory communication between ward councillors and the public in Jouberton Township's ward 12 in Matlosana Local Municipality.

The chapter further advances reasons behind the selection of this methodological orientation, as well as the approach undertaken in data collection and analysis.

Furthermore, qualitative research methodology probes the way in which individuals and groups (ward 12 councillors, ward committee members, and residents) understand and view the world and formulate meaning out of their experiences, through employing semi-structured interviews, focus-group interviews, and observation. The researcher further uses these methods to understand the processes as well as the social and cultural contexts which underlie the various

behavioural patterns mostly concerned with exploring the 'what' and 'how' questions of research. Lastly, the study is cross-sectional in nature (Maree, 2007: 51) in that it is based on interviewing a large and diverse number of the members of the community, based on gender (males and females) and including the voices of the community who reside in ward 12, this is inclusive of young people. This is done in order to get different views from the residents and because ward 12 community doesn't comprises of one gender , and also to ensure all the views are correctly captured by the researcher (implication of one gender) (Kothari, 2004:104).

In the following section of the study, a brief discussion around the research paradigm is outlined, with a view of justifying the study's philosophical orientation linked to the chosen qualitative methodology.

3.2 Research Paradigm

There are several different research approaches that inform our outlook and perspective in knowledge production. These approaches, also known as worldviews or philosophical orientations, are integral in our approach to knowledge construction on the basis of ontology, epistemology, and methodology (Tracy, 2013).

Ontology can be defined as the nature of what is real (reality), this world view is where the researcher is interested in what can be known. The ontological worldview influences the researcher's choice of epistemology. Epistemology is a body of knowledge. Here the researcher is focused on how knowledge is known. And methodology is regarded as a plan of action. It deals with 'how' a question; that is how research data is collected (Bates, 2007:58; Elshafie, 2013:05). Further, according to Krauss (2005), epistemology is the philosophy of knowledge, and ontology involves the philosophy reality. Epistemology is about how we come to know reality through the identification of practices that we apply in attaining knowledge. These world views are shaped by the discipline area of the researcher, the beliefs of advisers and faculty in a student's area and past research experiences. The types of beliefs held by individual researchers will often lead to embracing a certain methodology, in this case qualitative (Creswell, 2009: 6).

A careful review of the literature on worldviews shows that the different paradigms, namely, positivism, post-positivism, interpretivism, critical theory, post-structuralism, and pragmatism; are essential in, for example, enabling a researcher to make critical decisions about whether to adopt a qualitative, mixed-methods, or a qualitative approach to undertake empirical research. With that being said, many qualitative scholars work under diverse epistemological and ontological assumptions from their counterparts; this comes from how the world is viewed and

understood (c.f Kraus 2005; Flick, 2010; Allwood, 2012; Tracy, 2013; Eshafie, 2013; Shah & Al-Bargi, 2013).

Of the six, however, there are three dominant paradigms that have been the subject of inquiry for years. These include the positivist paradigm (with its related post-positivism approach), the interpretive paradigm (sometimes called constructivist paradigm), and the critical paradigm, which is related to the Frankfurt school of critical theory (Tracy, 2013, Creswell, 2014; Lune & Bruce, 2017).

Positivism (and its related post-positivism approach) focuses on approaching knowledge from the perspective that it is out there, in the natural environment and, thus, should be measured as objectively as possible without the use of preconceived knowledge, feelings, or bias that may taint the knowledge process (Tuli, 2010: 100; Shah & Al-Bargi, 2013: 254). From a research methodology perspective, a suitable methodological approach for collecting data and analysing, in line with the positivist paradigm, is qualitative methodology. Such an approach is conventionally adopted in the natural sciences, where experiments are commonly employed and statistical data is collected in clear 'scientific' processes that are in controlled environments (e.g., a science lab or a vegetable bed in an agricultural experiment) (cf. Allwood;2012: 1423).

On the other hand, post positivism followed after positivism paradigm, it's a mixture of interpretivism and positivism paradigm. Its focus includes the perspectives of comparative, historical, and philosophical analysis. It is also flexible which allows the opportunity to use many methods in carrying out research based on the nature of the question; it is also referred to critical multiplism (Panhwar et al, 2017).

Interpretivism, which is also referred to as the constructivist paradigm (see Dina, 2012: 70), focuses on approaching knowledge production from the perspective that knowledge is a social construct and, thus, its production relies on multiple constructions of reality (Eshafie, 2013:7).

Pragmatism is based on the word itself means "action", it's about the notion that knowledge emanates from learning from the outcomes and taking action. This applies to all human encounters and experiences. Pragmatic paradigm is Applicable to both qualitative and quantitative research methodology, meaning that it is not as new as it works together with mixed method of collecting data (Morgan, 2014; Badley, 2003).

Critical theory approaches knowledge from a Marxist-leaning approach that critiques the social order and questions the power (im) balances in knowledge production. It looks at the

relationship between the researcher and research subjects and who stands to materially gain or benefit from the research process (Eshafie, 2013: 9).

Many arguments have developed on what has come to be known as 'paradigm wars' in surrounding these research paradigms. However, scholars such as Mesel (2013) have advanced an argument that although there are inherent differences between these worldviews based on suitable disciplines within which they can be adopted, this should not mean that they are not compatible or that we should only focus on fault lines that are used to dichotomise them.

For present purposes, this study will focus its attention on only one of the critical epistemological assumptions from the six worldviews, namely, the interpretivism or constructivist paradigm. This is because in as much as there is plethora of insights from the literature presenting the cases of different philosophical assumptions, the unique quality of the constructivist worldview is chosen and preferred. As, in accordance with its application, individual researchers understand the knowledge and its production from the vantage point of multiple constructions of reality. This implies that knowledge cannot be viewed from only one perspective and, therefore, the role of the researcher is to put themselves in the shoes of multiple research subjects in order to understand the world from different eyes or lenses so that they can make a kaleidoscope of multiple visions and worldviews or perspectives of the world. Put differently, the aim of the researcher, in the constructivist paradigm is to rely on the participants' view of the situation being studied, predominantly through the exclusive use of a qualitative methodological approach (Creswell, 2014; Kraus, 2005: 761).

The constructivist paradigm is usually seen as an approach to qualitative research. It is an idea informed by the work of Burger and Luemann (1967). Here the researcher seeks to understand the world they live in. The researcher's aim is to rely on the participants' point of view on the subject matter rather than just narrowing meaning into a few ideas. The interaction between the researcher and participants is more on a discussion mode, where opened-ended questions are asked. The constructivists believe that when questions are put forward in different forms as it assists in fully understanding the subject matter under exploration (Creswell, 2009: 8; Molale, 2021: 127).

The constructivist approach differs from a positivist paradigm. The latter originally emanates from the field of natural science; it assumes that science is quantitative. It measures dependents and independents regarding a single phenomenon. It is based on the view that the main goal of knowledge is to describe what the research has experienced, simply sticking to what is observed and measured. In its nature, unlike the constructivism worldview/ approach, positivists divorce themselves from the world they study as they believe that the world is deterministic,

while other researchers confirm that participation is needed in order to further their understanding on the research subject (Flick, 2010: 69; Kraus, 2005: 170).

Researchers who advocate the positivist approach are more prone to utilise numerical measures of observation and pay attention to the behaviour of the individual. They believe that knowledge is conjectural; absolute truth is hard to find. Hence, they never attempt to prove their hypothesis; instead, they indicate a failure to reject the hypothesis (Creswell, 2009: 7).

Another approach which is dominant in the field of development communication is the critical approach, also known as the realism approach. It has both elements of the positivism and constructivism philosophical approaches. The epistemological approach recognises that knowledge of reality stems from social conditioning; thus, it cannot be understood separately from social actors. With realism, or rather the critical approach, the seeming contrast between quantitative and qualitative is therefore replaced by an approach that is considered appropriate given the research topic of interest and level of existing knowledge pertaining to it (Krauss, 2005: 761).

According to Lune and Berg (2017), the term 'critical' in this context aligns and is contributed to a response to the contemporary trends in society with a particular regard to power, prestige, privilege, and authority. The researcher trusts their choice of participants; he is concerned about social inequalities and directs their attention in understanding the participants' social situation.

As already cited, this study will apply a constructivist approach which is linked with a qualitative methodology. This epistemological approach is relevant since the study aims to explore the nature of participatory communication between ward councillors and the public in ward 12 in Jouberton at Matlosana Local Municipality. For the study to achieve its intended goal the selection of the constructivism approach is relevant because it will assist in maximising the study's validity during the data collection process. Here the researcher will play an active role by interacting with the field being explored, the researcher is interested in co-constructing knowledge with the participants to embrace and explore the inherent biasness within the interaction. The goal of the research is dependent on the views of participants' construction of meaning to the situation. The research uses an open-ended line of questions as the goal of the study is dependent on the views of participants' construction of meaning to the situation. The reason behind using open-ended questions is to carefully listen and understand the response and the settings (Creswell, 2009; Edmonds & Kennedy, 2015).

Constructivism links well with the qualitative methodology which will be applied in this study. It will allow the researcher to have personal interactions, as mentioned. This approach relies on

the fact that the subjects under investigation are human beings; the interaction will provide a unique window to their thoughts and world. It is through such interaction that the researcher will be allowed an opportunity to be immersed in the experiences of those involved during the meetings in ward 12. Over and above that, this research approach will afford the researcher an opportunity to revisit either the original field notes for verification of the conclusions, or the participants to collect additional data. Naturally, this will occur if there is a need to verify the collected data, or if there are gaps identified that need further clarification, particularly during data analysis (Relmer & Gregg, 2011:59).

Regarding this study, the constructivist view is well-suited as it allows for and is based on the principle of interacting with the subject under study, eliminating the element of subjectivity unlike positivist approach. It also provides for the crucial element of giving and making meaning of the collected data by allowing the researcher to interpret the information gathered. Here knowledge is established through the meaning attached to a phenomenon under study, interaction with the subject is taken seriously as it eliminates generalisation. Interpretation of the data is about understanding how the subjects understand their world (Krauss, 2005:759; Tuli, 2010: 100).

3.3 Research Design

The qualitative research design is concerned about subjectively assessing the attitude, views, and behaviour of participants (Eishfie, 2013: 8-9). This approach primarily depends on the format in which the researcher plans to communicate their findings based on the above-mentioned patterns. The process involves identification of themes, assigning codes to the main themes, classifications of responses under the main theme, and the integration of themes and responses into the report (Kumar, 2011: 248; Kothari, 2004:31).

Concisely, the research design can be viewed as a means to achieve the research study goals. It links theoretical frameworks, questions, and presentational goal with methods utilised for the intended goal. Research designs are also referred to as strategic inquiries within a qualitative method. The origin for this method comes from anthropology, sociology, and humanities just to mention a few. Here the researcher is not limited as he will construct a clear explanatory picture through a narrative of his experience. Many scholars in the past decade have been able to summarise various types of qualitative procedures, i.e., narrative research, phenomenological research, and grounded theory, just but to mention a few. Narrative research comes from humanities where the researcher focuses on the lives of individuals, asks questions to be able to provide a story about their lives, and the information gathered is told in a narrative chronological manner (Flick, 2010: 135; Creswell, 2014: 42).

Regarding this study, an exploratory research design, which is a plan through which the investigation was executed in ward 12 of the Jouberton Township which falls in the North-West Province under Matlosana Local Municipality. Ward 12 in Jouberton is divided into three sub-sections, namely extension 22, extension 17, and extension 24. The councillor is expected to conduct three meetings a month to cater for the entire population in the area: one meeting is held every month with at least 70 to 100 community members per sub-section in attendance; however, this was not the case. The researcher gathered data from all three sub-sections. Participants gathered per sub-section over a period of two months. All in all, the researcher attended four meetings where data was collected, through semi-structured interviews and focus-group interview discussions. The data was recorded using a digital recorder and was later analysed through a thematic analysis technique.

3.3.1 Population and Sampling

Defined and categorised as a way of selecting participants based on class, income, demographics, and age for a particular study, sampling applies to both qualitative and quantitative methods. For the present study, all community members of Jouberton are regarded as the population, which is about 438,486 people (Matlosana, 2022-2027). Sampling affords the researcher an opportunity to minimise the risk of favouritism and partiality when collecting data. It also assists in suggesting ways of drawing 'scientific' samples that are random and representative of the population and whose findings will inform the researcher about the population in general. Here the researcher used their own judgement to select an appropriate sample size for this study (Kumar, 2011: 189; Maree, 2007:172).

This sampling can be viewed as an integral method of selecting a pool of respondents in qualitative inquiry. Its approaches to collecting data, analysing it, interpretation, and reporting differs from quantitative sampling in that it is reliant on open-ended data. The omission of it can lead to various assumptions. The assumption is that qualitative research utilises a more objective probable scenario to enhance the study's process (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015: 540).

3.3.2 Purposive Sampling

In case of this research, judgemental or purposive sampling was utilised as it afforded the researcher a chance to rely on his knowledge and judgement to choose participants. This strategy is commonly used in qualitative research, when in the field and collecting data. In addition, the researcher depends on their personal bias and experience as a key when collecting data (Kumar, 2011: 189).

It must be noted that all participants were selected according to their relevance to the study. For instance, the three ward committee members are responsible for facilitating community discussions with the ward councillor regarding issues of infrastructure, transversal issues, and economic developments; while the mayor or council speaker, public participation/IDP manager, communication manager and ward councillor are representatives of the municipality responsible for political and administrative oversight. Ward committee members and residents represent the marginal voices when it comes to power dynamics. This sampling procedure will, therefore, yield valuable insights in an attempt to answer the study's research questions.

Four to five interviews were used to gather the relevant data that assisted in determining what is the kind of communication between councillors and the public during municipal ward meetings. Also, eight members from each of the three areas were recruited on voluntary participation in focus-group interview discussions. Four focus-group interview discussions were conducted with the groups that constituted a representative sample comprising adult males, females, as well as young people who are deemed relevant to participate in the study.

Table 3.1: A Summary demonstrating a link between sampling technique used and the sampled respondents for focus-group interviews as well as semi-structured interviews

| Sampling technique | Participants of sample for semi-structured interview | Participants of sample for focus-group interview |
|------------------------------|---|---|
| Purposive Sampling Technique | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three officials from the Matlosana Local Municipality. • Three ward committee members are responsible for facilitating community discussions with the ward councillor. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eight members from each of the three areas were recruited for voluntary participation in focus-group interview discussions. |

3.4 Data Collection

The present study applied the following qualitative data collection methods: semi-structured and focus-group interviews to explore the nature of participatory communication between the ward councillors and the public.

3.4.1 Interviews

Defined as two-way conversation, the interviewer extracts information by asking those who are participating questions to gather data and learn more about their views, beliefs, opinions, ideas,

and behaviour (c.f Holland & Campbell, 20005; Maree, 2010). Interviews are beneficial in that they allow the researcher to see the world through the eyes of the participants in order to obtain rich descriptive data that helps in constructing the participants' knowledge and social reality (Maree 2010:87). In the following sections, we will look at semi-structured interviews as well as focus-group interviews in detail.

- **Semi-Structured Interviews:**

These are usually used to corroborate collected data emerging from other sources. This type of interview tends to take time as it requires those participating to respond a set of predetermined questions. It is very flexible and allows both participants to relate and understand one another (Maree, 2010: 87; Holland & Campbell, 2005: 37).

There is about three types of qualitative interviews, namely unstructured interviews, structured interviews, and semi-structured interviews (Singer, 2008:14). Structured interviews follow a rigid structure of questions upon which the researcher is limited in terms of asking questions. This type of interview does not allow the researcher to be flexible or creative. A fixed set of questions is prepared in accordance with this rigid structure, thus implying that the researcher cannot ask anything else apart from the questions prepared in the Q-sheet and there is no room for follow-ups (c.f Kraus, 2005; Singer et al, 2008).

Unstructured interviews are in stark contrast with structured interviews. They are arguably most suitable in longitudinal, ethnographic studies or even when used in grounded theory. This is because they follow a lax and unstructured line of questioning with everything and anything allowed to be spoken about, just as long as the respondents are willing to share.

Semi-structured interviews follow a relatively flexible structure that allows for the researcher to ask follow-ups and to come up with new questions during the interview process, based on the respondents they receive. This type of interview is suitable for instances where the researcher is able to ascertain that the respondents have more things to say, thus expanding an idea or making follow-ups to not misconstrue the respondents' perspective on the phenomenon under exploration (Newcomer et al., 2015:189).

Semi-structured interviews are suitable for the present study because they allow the researcher to be flexible enough to make follow-ups but unlike unstructured interviews, they are not all encompassing. They are limited to a set of parameters that are guided by one of the specific research questions in this study (see Section 1.4.1)

In Table 3.2, a description regarding the participants from semi-structured interviews is provided. In essence, there were three respondents who participated in semi-structured interviews. These were the ward councillor, and two ward committee members. The researcher was initially aiming to recruit five respondents for semi-structured but two other potential respondents declined to participate in the study, citing personal reasons. For a study such as this one, the researcher needed to interface with people who are from two groups that are directly involved in the public participation process through ward meetings: these were members of the ward committee representing the municipality, including the ward councillor on the one hand; and ordinary citizens that are from ward 12 in Jouberton Township (which is divided into three extensions: extension 17, extension 22, & extension 24). For semi-structured interviews the three respondents were ultimately found viable, especially considering the fact that this was out of a pool of 11 potential respondents; this is the number of ward committee members and the ward councillor. As per the Matlosana Local Municipality's 2022-2027 IDP document a ward committee is constituted by ten members who are elected by the community and a ward councillor. The participants were representative of all ages and had two males and one female.

An appointment was made with a ward councillor who is a male in his mid-fifties. He is the chairperson of the ward committee in ward 12. In addition, appointments were also made with the two ward committee members: a young male in his early thirties who is responsible for the portfolio of infrastructure and economic issues, as well as a woman in her early fifties who is responsible for transversal issues in the ward. These participants were selected for their specialised knowledge of community issues and because they are also tasked with assisting the ward councillor to host community ward meetings each month. During these monthly ward meetings, the ward councillor has the leading role, by virtue of being the chairperson of the committee. In Table 3.2 below, the semi-structured interview respondents are profiled, and pseudonyms are used for them as part of a confidentiality agreement the researcher has with them.

Table 3.2: Profile of Semi-structured interviewees

| Member | Gender | Pseudonym |
|-----------------------|--------|---|
| Ward Councillor | Male | Participant 1 - P-1: refers to the councillor of ward 12. |
| Ward Committee member | Male | Participant - P-2: refers to the ward committee member who is male. |
| Ward Committee Member | Female | Participant 3 - P-3: refers to the ward committee member who is female. |

- **Focus-Group Interview:**

This is a type of interview which is conducted with a group. It is often mistaken to be an in-depth interview, but the difference is that the latter is only used with an individual. Some researchers argue that the former produces data rich in details which sometimes is arduous to achieve. During this interview participants are able to build on each other's ideas and opine during the discussion which allows unexpected comments and new perspectives to be explored easily (Kumar, 2011: 160).

A unique quality of qualitative research is its ability of using a natural setting in which events occur. In this research model, the researcher does not detach themselves from events, but becomes part of the context through collecting data and improving this collected data first hand from insight (Naidoo, 2010: 104).

These interviews are usually lauded as one the most incredible data collection methods, as through it rich and reliable information is extracted through the process itself. They are also

often confused with just group interviews because its setting differs with the framing of questions. Group interviews do not allow for open-ended interviews, while focus-group interviews are based more on open-ended interviews. This is where participants are able to build from other comments, similar ideas, and views. Here the researcher has an advantage of interrogation through asking questions, debating issues for a clear understanding, and arguing about responses that have been generated (Maree, 2007: 90).

3.5 The Outcome of the Study's Sampling Frame

In ensuring that ethical standards of research are adhered to, all identities of respondents are kept anonymous. The participants of the research were clustered in groups and allocated pseudonyms and identifiers. The below table is a summary composed of descriptions of each participant in the group, and this is done for ease of reference as well, and to also show a clear picture with regards to the general context from which each respondent based their views. Table 3.3 presents a brief background for semi-structured interview respondents as well as their pseudonyms/identifiers.

Table 3.3: Semi-structured interview pseudonyms for participants, respondents, and their brief context

| Semi-structured interview participants | Background and context |
|---|--|
| Participant 1 P-1 Participant 2 P-2 Participant 3 P-3 | With regards to purposive sampling a total number of (3), ward officials in the Matlosana municipality and ward 12 in the Jouberton township. Participants were selected according to their relevance to the study. For instance, the three representatives from ward 12 responsible for facilitating community discussions regarding issues of infrastructure, transversal issues, and economic developments. |

Below (table 3.4) shows a link of constructs that emanate from the theoretical statements together with the questions that were asked to semi-structured interview respondents.

Table 3.4: Constructs used in development of semi-structured interview questions

| Questions for semi-structured interviews | Constructs measured In semi-structured questions |
|--|--|
| What is your understanding about ward meeting? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge. • Empowerment. • Education. |
| Take me through what you discuss at ward meetings? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power display. • Knowledge. • Involvement. • Dialogue. |
| How would you explain the participation process during the ward meetings? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation. • Power display. • Activeness. • Engagement. • Communication. |
| How does getting involved during a communication/participation benefit and assist people involved? How is participation facilitated during ward meetings? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowerment. • Self-reliance. • Collectiveness. • Partnership. |
| What are communication techniques and methods employed during the ward meetings? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment. • Consultation. • Openness and fairness. • Strategic. |
| What is the importance and role of participatory communication during ward meetings? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power sharing. • Interaction, input, and feedback. • Collectiveness. • Inclusivity. |
| How do you view the nature of communication during ward meetings? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dictatorship. • Decision making. |
| How can the communication process be improved? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collectiveness in decision making. • Power sharing. • Input. |
| In your view, how do you arrive at decision process? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The nature of interaction. |
| How does the communication process take place between you, councillors, and ward committee members during the meetings? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness. • Collectiveness. |

| | |
|---|--|
| What can be done to improve participation during ward meetings? How can participatory communication be improved? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willingness. • Knowledge. |
| Does culture feature in during ward meetings? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of language. |
| Why is culture important in the context of these meetings? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obstacles during the interaction. |

In table 3.5, pseudonyms for groups (focus-group) interaction are outlined. It should be noted that, in the instance of the focus-group participants, not every views from the twenty-six participants were used in the presentation of the findings. Instead, selections of some of their remarks were made with regards to the themes that were identified. Therefore, the table, is not a reflection of all participants that were part of the focus-group discussions. To the best of the researcher's knowledge and observation, these are the views that stood out in their conceptual relationship with the themes.

This section is based on the detailed description of participants from focus-group interviews. This involved twenty-three respondents who formed four groups (see Table 3.5), the participants were interviewed until the point of saturation. The sample participants were representative of all genders and ages. Table 3.5 shows the sample of respondents involved in focus-group interviews. This part and process allowed the researcher to further understand and poke the participants' understanding of their role and experiences.

Regarding gender and age, overall, about two thirds of the participants were male, meaning that above 85 per cent of community members that participated were male and 15 per cent were females. From all the residents of ward 12, twenty-six of them took part voluntarily in the interview. They were aged between 25 - 60. These respondents were selected in accordance to their knowledge in the research area and their responsibility.

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews and focus-group. The techniques offered are presented in a way that they were procedurally carried out. Interaction through interviews with officials in Matlosana Municipality served the role of understanding the nature of participatory communication during ward meetings. And on top of that, focus-group discussions done and carried out with objectivity to define the perceptions of the participants of the community and residents of ward 12 (Jouberton) in Matlosana Municipality, Kenneth Kaunda District.

On top of that, the theoretical statements were made from the literature on the relevant concepts in participatory communication (see Section 3.4.), e.g., empowerment, dialogue, participation, and culture. These concepts were included in all interview processes to gain insight and perspective from all participants.

Table 3.5: Focus Group respondent pseudonyms for participants' and their brief context.

| Group according to discussion | Pseudonyms for each participant according to groups. | Background & context |
|-------------------------------|--|---|
| Group 1 | Participant P-A Participant P-B Participant P-C Participant P-D Participant P-E Participant P-F Participant P-G Participant P-H | This first group consisted of eight members. All the members estimated to be between the ages of 35-60. With regards to gender three of the group members of the group are females and five males. These members are all affiliated to one political party; the observation was made because of the remarks made by the participants. It must be noted that political party membership was not a issue since the study aims not to delve too much into political issues. But one thing that also came to the fore is also the fear of fully expressing themselves, as they kept on asking if they are seen, and they looked around to see if they were watched by other members who refused to participate. |
| Group 2 | Participant P-I Participant P-J Participant P-K Participant P-L Participant P-M Participant P-N Participant P-O | This second group consisted of seven members from the second section. All the members are estimated to also be between the age of 35-60 |
| Group 3 | Participant P-P | This group is made up of eight members, half of |

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| | Participant P-Q Participant P-R Participant P-S Participant P-T Participant P-U Participant P-V Participant P-W | which were woman who are likely to be between the ages of 30 and 50. All of them are unemployed and show disinterest in the role that the ward must play in society in general, they feel forgotten hence they are unemployed. |
|--|---|--|

• **Focus Group-Interview Discussion: Community Members in Ward 12 (Important Role Players).**

Focus-group interviews are research tools used more often in the field of social science dating back decades ago (from the 1940s). Researchers rely on this technique because it holds a unique stance; it allows greater potential for participation. During the interviews participants interacted with each other and build on one another's comments rather continuously commenting directly to the moderator. Here the moderator plays a less central role as respondents shared their experiences, ideas and even offer opinions (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2014:1; Krueger; Casey; Donner; Kirch & Maack; 2001:5).

With regards to this study, focus-group discussion, as a technique for collecting data, was employed. According to Stewart and Shamdasani (2014), focus-group interviews have played an integral part of the social scientist's toolkit throughout. These interviews are best at yielding data rich in details which are sometimes hard to obtain directly from individual participants. During this process, the moderator/researcher will be attentive of the process and be on the front seat as things unfold during the interview. This happens as a group of participants are interviewed through being probed on a set of questions without arguing about the responses generated (Niewenhuis, 2007: 90).

Table 3.6: Constructs used in development of focus group interview questions

| Questions for focus group interview | Constructs measured in semi-structured questions |
|--|--|
| What is your understanding about ward meetings? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge. • Empowerment. • Education. |
| Take me through what you discuss at ward meetings? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power display. • Knowledge. • Involvement. |

| | |
|--|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dialogue. |
| How would you explain the participation process during the ward meetings? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation. • Power display. • Activeness. • Engagement. • Communication. |
| How does getting involved during a communication/participation benefit and assist people involved? How is participation facilitated during ward meetings? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowerment. • Self-reliance. • Collectiveness. • Partnership. |
| What are the communication techniques and methods employed during the ward meetings? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment. • Consultation. • Openness and fairness. • Strategic. |
| What is the importance and role of participatory communication during ward meetings? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power sharing. • Interaction, input, and feedback. • Collectiveness. • Inclusivity |
| How do you view the nature of communication during ward meetings? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dictatorship. • Decision making. |
| How can the communication process be improved? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collectiveness in decision making. • Power sharing. • Input. |
| In your view, how do you arrive at the decision process? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The nature of interaction. |
| How does the communication process take place between you, councillors, and ward committee members during the meetings? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness. • Collectiveness. |
| What can be done to improve participation during ward meetings How can participatory communication be improved? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willingness. • Knowledge. |
| Does culture feature in where during ward meetings? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of Language. |
| Why is culture important in the context of these meetings? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obstacles during the interaction. |

3.6 Data Analysis.

The data analysis process is a tedious, consumes time, and messy procedure. It relies on how a researcher intends to layout their findings. Data analysis can be characterised into four steps: identification of main themes, assigning codes to themes, classification of responses under themes, and integrating themes and responses into a final report. During the process, the researcher has the advantage of understanding what has been discussed and even wields an even greater advantage when it comes to describing the data collected (Kumar, 2018; Graue, 2016).

The current research study employed thematic analysis (TA) as a data analysis strategy. Thematic analysis, according to Braun and Clarke (2012), is a systematic process of identify, and organising insight into a pattern. TA also allows the researcher to make sense of meaning and experience during the process of analysing data. This method is flexible especially for qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2012:57).

Furthermore, this method is very useful when dealing with data when the research aim is to extract information to determine the relationship amongst variables and compare the sets of evidence. Here the researcher links various concepts and opinions, in order to assist in data interpretation, and it also works well with the categorisation of themes (Servaes, 2006; Ibrahim, 2012).

3.6.1 Logistics relating to the data collection procedure and challenges experienced

In accessing participants, numerous emails, WhatsApp, and telephonic engagements took place between early March-October 2021 between the researcher and various relevant officials within Matlosana local municipality. The conversations also included interaction with the secretaries of relevant senior officials and colleagues of the chosen officials. Eventually, the meeting with some of the officials were scheduled but never took place. The appointment was also made with the councillor of ward 12 in order to access the study setting; permission was granted. Semi-structured interviews were held from 12 September 2021 (this includes the ward committee members and ward councillor) and it was based on the availability of the mentioned participants). Four group discussions were conducted over a period of two days, from the 9th-10th of September 2021 with a total of 29 community members. To get access to the residents, the researcher requested permission and assistance from the councillor and some community members, permission was also asked from all discussants ahead of the discussion.

The discussions were recorded, a total of nine interviews were used in the data analysis. And all recordings of the discussions with all participants were used. Knowledge and memory were used in the analysis, especially the participants' understanding of what ward meeting are, the importance of getting involved, the importance and role of participatory communication during ward meeting, how they viewed the nature of communication during ward meeting, and how they believe the communication process can be improved.

- **Data transcription and preparation**

After the collection of data, transcription started from 15 September 2021. It is very long and time-consuming process which took around two months in totality to complete. In the case of semi-structured interviews, the researcher started with a full transcription and took two weeks, while focus-group discussions took six weeks. The transcription of data and preparation allowed the researcher to be immersed in the data thereby creating room for the extraction of some themes (deductively) from the data set.

- **Data and thematic analysis**

Analysis of data can be described as a contested and complex part of the qualitative research process, which receives limited theoretical attention. In most cases and incidents researchers need useful guidelines on how to analyse qualitative data but a challenge tends to be lack of clear guidance for using analytic methods. During the analysis process one of the most vital steps especially in a qualitative study is that it plays a huge role in assisting with making sense of the data they have collected. It is a very draining and time consuming and this is mainly because qualitative data needs a lot of contextualisation from the information collected, it also has to do with transforming raw material, themes, categories, describing of data, evaluation, and coding of raw data that has been collected (Ngulube, 2015:1).

According to Vaismoradi et al. (2013), qualitative methodologies consist of the philosophical assumption, perspectives, and approaches that are used to render data collection open to analysis. Here analysing data can be viewed as part of three concurrent flows of activity, that is, data reduction, data transcribed and analysed, and drawing the conclusion.

3.7 Identified categories, themes and codes

Themes, categories, and concepts came from the qualitative analysis are presented in this section. These findings reflect the results of the interview analysis, which answered the key research question. Coding is inherently a qualitative researcher's essential strategy based on their in-depth understanding of the research process, the research environment, as well as the

data that was collected. It entails a process of analysis, a formal system of organising data, where the researcher uncovers and documents the links between experience and concepts emanating from the collected data. The process of creating the codes is part of the collection of data and is mentioned in the third chapter (see Section 3.7). These codes were used to explore the nature of participatory communication during meetings.

Table 3.7: Thematic analysis categories, themes and codes

| Category | Themes | Codes used in the qualitative analysis |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Data transcription of officials/ semi-structured and focus-group interviews.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate communication platforms/channels. • Participation. • The nature of communication. • Decision making. • Empowerment. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication techniques. • Participatory communication . • Importance of participation. • Benefits. • Improvement. • Outcomes. • Involvement. • • Education. • Change. • Tolerance. • Perception. • Benefits. |

3.8 Reliability

Evaluating the quality of research is salient in any qualitative study. But many academics have argued in the past that in social sciences, reliability can be a challenge since behaviour is never stagnant.

According to Noble and Smith (2015), qualitative research method is usually criticised for not having scientific rigour with a possibility of poor reasoning of methods used, a lack of transparency in the analytical procedures, and the findings being a collection of personal opinions subject to the researcher's bias. They argue that qualitative research is challenging because there is lack of consensus about the standards by which research should be judged. Gorman and Clayton (2005) suggested that with qualitative research multiple sources of data collection be incorporated to increase the reliability of the research. In this research study there is recorded audio interviews and field notes to guide the research with consistency and accuracy of the transcriptions and their interpretation.

Creswell (2009), states that qualitative researchers check continuously to determine if their approaches are consistent or reliable. In this context, he defines validity as checking for accuracy of findings by using research procedures, while reliability is ensuring that a consistent approach of research is applied across different projects. Qualitative researchers are dependent on documenting procedures of collected data, and this gave rise to the idea creating a database for research study.

3.8.1 Reliability procedures

- Continuous checking of transcripts to ensure that mistakes were not made during transcription.
- Quality assurance on codes developed by different researchers by comparing results that are independently derived.
- Coordinate the communication amongst the coders by regular documented meetings and by sharing analyses.
- On top of that, it is imperative to always ensure the internal validity of the research study, which refers to the extent to which conclusions of the study provide an accurate description of what transpired and why. In conducting this study (see Chapter 1, Section 3) interviewing

three senior officials responsible in ward 12 of the Matlosana Local Municipality, and more than five members from each of the three areas were recruited for voluntary participation (Lune & Berg, 2017:101).

The study used two research methods to collect data which allowed for cross-referencing, also referred to as triangulation. This assisted with the internal validity of the research. The method of triangulation is usually viewed as a procedure used to examine a conclusion. Triangulation is usually achieved when interviews with role players has been realised, in this case interviewing six senior officials from the Matlosana Local Municipality, and eight members from each of the three areas mentioned.

3.9 Ethics clearance application, gatekeeper's consent, and ethical considerations

According to the North-West University's ethical regulations, an application for the study to be sanctioned by the university, through ethical clearance, was approved in August 2020 (see annexure A: Ethical clearance/approval letter from the NWU). As part of the ethical clearance conditions, permission was needed from the gatekeepers in the study, who were identified as the municipal mayor and municipal manager of Matlosana Local Municipality. Approval from the participants was received in May 2021 (see annexure B: Letter of approval from Matlosana Local Municipality). These approvals paved the way for arrangements to be made for data collection, which took place in September 2021.

During the data collection process, no risks were experienced, but one challenge faced was that two other potential semi-structured interviewees withdrew from participating in the study. This led the researcher to interview three respondents instead of five. Additionally, it would have also been beneficial if the researcher could interview other respondents from the side of the municipality, such as the mayor, council speaker, or the public participation/IDP manager. These challenges emanated from the sudden and untimely death of the mayor, which also led to the miscommunication that took place when the researcher was interfacing with the mayor's office. In addition, the council speaker refused to avail himself for interviews, arguably because they had to prepare for the mayor's funeral at a time where COVID-19 was also an obstacle, especially due to lockdown measures and restrictions on gatherings that were imposed by the South African government. Notwithstanding, both the offices of the mayor and that of the council speaker gave approval letters and endorsed that this research be conducted in ward 12.

Regarding the focus-group interview, some participants lacked patience as they believed that the research was not going to personally benefit them. Others also mentioned that they did not like to attend the data collection sessions because they believed nothing was going to change

given that there were no improvements in the quality of their lives in the past. Notwithstanding, the researcher managed to get enough participants for each focus-group interview.

3.10 Conclusion

Chapter three has extensively gave a detailed explanation of the strategy for collecting and analysis empirical data in this study, through focus-group interviews and semi-structured interviews. These two methods were found most suitable for use in a qualitative study involving wad committee members and residents of ward 12 – which is situated in the Jouberton as a township in Matlosana Local Municipality. During the data collection period, there were some challenges experienced but the researcher was able to navigate them and ultimately obtained consent to conduct interviews which led to a treasure trove of data that was recorded and used for presentation, interpretation, and analysis. Moreover, a strategy of collection of data and analysis was detailed. The following chapter, this process of data presentation and analysis is detailed with a view of demonstrating how the study answered the two remaining research question (see Section 1.4.1).

CHAPTER 4 DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

In Chapter 2, two theories, namely, development communication theory and Paulo Freire's dialogical praxis were outlined as a way of advancing the study's theoretical underpinnings. Both these theories were used to assist in exploring and identifying gaps in the literature insofar as participatory communication in the context of public participation in local government is concerned. By exposing these gaps, the study's significance was situated, and ground was laid for an exposition of participatory communication concepts, namely, participation, dialogue, and empowerment, within the context of public participation in the municipal ward system in the Jouberton Township, in the North-West Province of South Africa. The basis for this theoretical exposition of participatory communication concepts was to explore the nature of participation when conceptualised within participatory communication, grounded in dialogical praxis and development communication theory.

In Chapter 3, the research methodology used in this study was discussed and the study's data collection, management, and analysis strategy (i.e., research design) was outlined. The chapter went further to advance reasons and motivations for the selection of the methodology used in the study, as well as the way in which the study was conducted. It started with defining what qualitative research is, its significance to this study, its advantages and disadvantages. Furthermore, the chapter went on to outline the ethical considerations taken into account when data was collected, managed, and analysed.

The present chapter, therefore, presents the themes, categories, and concepts which emerged from the theories as well as from the data with the aim of conceptualising and providing coherent interpretation to the study's findings. The data that was collected by means of semi-structured interviews and focus-group interview discussions is analysed with the intention of answering the study's remaining three questions. This is in line with the study's data collection and analysis strategy (research design) outlined in Chapter 3 (see Sections 3.3-3.7).

- How do councillors and ward committee members in Matlosana Local Municipality facilitate communication platforms/channels in light of community participation in ward meetings,
- What are the perceptions of role-players (i.e., community members) regarding the nature of participatory communication during Ward meetings?

- What are the practice-oriented and theoretical implications of participatory communication in ward meetings in Matlosana Municipality?

As described in Chapter 3 (see Section 3.6), the data was collected by means of semi-structured interviews with officials (i.e., the ward councillor and two ward committee members of ward 12 in Jouberton), while focus-group interviews were conducted with 26 community members of the ward.

The chapter proceeds by providing the analysis of data collected through semi-structured interviews. Then, the chapter outlines and interprets the collected data and provide an overview of the demographics of interviewees in table format followed by an overview of themes in a summary format. As highlighted in the next section, the present chapter is divided into four sections. What follows this introduction is a section that deals with the analysis of data collected from semi-structured interviews. A rich corpus of data was collected and enhanced the process of data interpretation and analysis. In the third section, we deal with data collected from focus-group interviews. In both sections, the following themes are presented with the aim of answering the second and third research questions of the study:

- Facilitation of communication platforms and channels.
- Participation.
- Decision making.
- Empowerment.

In the fourth section, the last question is answered by means of a synthesis where the data stemming from the field is contextualised against perspectives from scholarly literature as well as from the legislative frameworks. Lastly, the chapter concludes by providing a summary of how the remaining research questions were answered.

4.2 Findings from Semi-Structured Interviews

4.2.1 Presentation and Analysis of Data from Semi-Structured Interviews to Address the Study's Second Research Question

The study's second research question is:

How do councillors and ward committee members in Matlosana Local Municipality facilitate communication platforms/channels in light of community participation in ward meetings?

In order to answer this question, all four themes are used in semi-structured interviews with the three respondents, namely: facilitation of communication platforms, participation, decision making, and empowerment.

- **Facilitation of communication.**

Facilitation of communication platforms or channels refer to all logistical activities related to the planning, mobilisation, and all interactions in the build-up to, and during, ward meetings. The researcher began by asking questions with the intention of understanding how ward meetings are planned for, and what communication processes take place in the build-up to, and during, the meetings.

In principle, ward meetings are supposed to be held once a month, at a preferred venue by all role-players. One of the observations made is that this is not the case in ward 12. Semi-structured interviews highlighted various challenges, including, poor attendance, and lack of understanding, patience, and commitment on the part of community members.

Data gathered in this study shows that the process of facilitation of communication does not only start when meetings take place. Through the responses of the participants, the process of facilitation is not only done with a purpose to guide the proceeding from invitations, planning, and recording of minutes to execution. This finding is supported by the excerpts below of the officials' responses.

P-1: "... It's easy to facilitate, we start with circulating the attendance register, allow everyone to participate, including other political parties to take part. And, as a chairperson, I need to be neutral in terms of the engagement, never biased."

P-2: "... We involve them to show how hard it is to get what we want. Here the ward councillor is the facilitator; he is the one that sits in the council."

P-3: "... We talk first as the ward committee, and then we discuss with the councillor . We use loud hailers, register, when we meet that's when we talk about what's on the agenda."

In the above interview extracts, P-1 believes facilitation of participation and communication during ward meetings is amongst the easiest tasks they perform, because they get to use different communication techniques to interact with all the community members, while maintaining impartiality. P-2 regards it as a process where they expose community members to the complex nature of development at local government level looking at how difficult it is to implement development programmes as a result of, amongst other things, governmental bureaucracy. The implication from these interview extracts is that in ward 12, officials are the custodians of any public participation processes and they decide when the community should

have the opportunity to communicate their needs or express frustrations with municipal service delivery.

In addition, one of the semi-structured interviewees (i.e., P-3) appeared to be very assertive in her interaction with the researcher. She indicated that she believed in doing things the same way, which is, always giving the first chance to officials and then at a later stage, allowing residents to speak on each and every issue worth discussing during ward meetings. This perspective gave the impression that the public participation process is controlled by the ward committee, which, in turn, signals a marginalisation of community members. The message that keeps coming from the semi-structured interviewees is that they know the importance of conducting meetings from the beginning to the end, and they know where to involve community members in discussions.

Proper records of meetings are very important as this shows professionalism. In addition, this proper recordkeeping is essential because the ward committee needs to submit records to the municipality as evidence that they held ward meetings. As the third respondent asserted, there are several methods they use to facilitate communication with community members before and during ward meetings. These include informing the public about an upcoming ward meeting through the use of loud hailers, making use of an attendance register to record all those who are in attendance, and teaching community members about the process of their ward meetings, their purpose, and making them understand what their role is during the meeting.

From these responses, it became evident that it is the prerogative of the ward councillor and his committee members to call and invite community members to ward meetings. These meetings are hosted by the ward councillor and his committee and there has never been a situation where, for example, community members call or host ward meetings where they can interact with the ward councillor and the committee, or a meeting on their own to deliberate on local community issues. This reveals a one-sided nature of communication, where the ward councillor and his committee are using communication as a linear method of reaching to the community members who are recipients of the whole communication process.

If we are to borrow from Freire's (1993) dialogical praxis, the kind of communication that should be facilitated between municipal representatives (ward councillor and committee members) and community members in ward meetings should be rooted in dialogue, as genuine discourse. According to Jenlink and Banathy (2005), this is a prescriptive interpretation of dialogue based on the function it ought to fulfil when individuals are involved in group discussions, especially about development and social change endeavours (cf. Molale, 2021). Its purpose, as Freire (1993) describes it, is rooted in praxis, which is a process of action and reaction, taking place

between interlocutors who view each other intersubjectively as equals to transform the world within which they live (cf. Molale, 2021). The reason why dialogue should be interpreted in this way is because it cannot happen or take place amongst those who can name the world and those who are marginalised or those who are denied the chance and opportunity to opine meaningfully to the process of naming the world.

This implies that those who have been denied their primordial right to speak their word in a meaningful way must first reclaim the right to be equal partners in the process and guard against being dehumanised or being regarded as passive actors who are merely present at such forums as a means to fulfil certain ends. Put differently, dialogue and communication that involves more than one person, cannot be just an act of one person or group dominating others, but it should be a space where there is equality and two-way communication that involves action and reflection is practised at all times. Freire (1993) takes it further by rejecting the notion that people can interact in communication or engage in discourse in a mundane manner, without the process needing to be meaningful. He argues that it is an encounter between participants working together to transform their setting. He describes it as an act of creation which must not be used as an instrument to dominate or rather suppress others, but rather as a main conquest towards liberation.

Furthermore, and more specifically looking at participatory communication in South Africa's local government, Molale (2019) also concluded that communicating dates for community meetings remains the prerogative of municipal officials. Community members merely play a passive role by providing their wish-lists to the officials who, in turn, have all the power over when meetings are held, where they are taking place, and what is discussed. There are recently published studies that have been conducted on the subject, that have made similar observations (cf. Molale, 2021; Naidoo, 2010; Ramphal, 2019; Enaifghe; Adetiba, 2019).

It is clear from the responses that ward meetings are spaces where the community members are invited to come and respond to specified questions that are posed by the ward councillor and his committee, thus limiting the extent to which community members can have an authoritative voice in the process. This observation further confirms a similar discovery in Molale's (2021) recent PhD study, although at another municipality and from another perspective (i.e., public participation in municipal IDP processes).

It could be argued, moreover, that this one-sided or linear nature of communication has unintended and negative consequences, and it could be one of the root causes of the strained relationships as well as a lack of rapport between these municipal representatives and the community members. This argument could also be used to explain why, between August 2020

and January 2021, there were as many as 900 community protests across South African municipalities which are associated with public service delivery lapses (Dayimani, 2022). The issue of strained relationships is corroborated by one of the semi-structured interviewees, who indicated that they are, at times, scared of the possibility of the eruption of conflict, especially when some community members attend meetings drunk. This point is further highlighted in the following interview extract:

P-1: "Some people come drunk, some angry, etcetera. The nature is frustrating, people want to participate but they don't know how."

Deducing from the above response, when talking about the nature of communication during the meeting, it would seem that there is a challenge in terms of how some community members conduct themselves. It appears that the meetings are not what they are supposed to be like; they are often disrupted, and the officials often feel overwhelmed. The issue of alcohol is a very interesting point and it speaks to how serious (or otherwise) these meetings are taken by some. The underlying question to this response is why people come drunk to meetings, this remains to be a fundamental question especially when attending a meeting of this nature. There is an element of overlooking the problem and focusing on other external factors. For communication to work, all participants must first be willing to derive value from ward meetings, and secondly, they must, therefore, be in a state where they all compromise and find each other.

The respondent is, furthermore, of the view that such unacceptable behaviour is antithetical to the fundamental goals and objectives of ward meetings and they defeat their purpose. However, it should be cautioned that not all community members come to the meetings while under the influence of alcohol, and it should further be noted that not all meetings are held with people being under the influence. That being said, the respondent was merely narrating some challenges they face when in some instances they find some community members being intoxicated. He also indicated that they have ways of dealing with people who tend to be disruptive, asserting that community members themselves do, from time to time, also help in bringing order and stability when it so happens that there are those who come to meetings under the influence of alcohol and try to destabilise the proceedings.

This line of thought corroborates similar observations made by Msibi and Penzhorn (2010), when they argued that participation reinforces the need for communities to adopt development activities appropriate for them. Additionally, it also backs up Molale's (2014) argument that in order for the meeting to yield positive results and for active participation to be realised in such meetings, participants ought to behave in a way in which conflicts are avoided. He stated that participants must respect and have mutual trust for each other, with a common interest of

making sure that their relationship is successful and yields positive results for the sake of the ward.

This point is also revealed by other semi-structured interviewees, namely, P-2 and P-3, who at some point appeared struggling when coming to talk about participants' conduct, but the responses could be extracted from when they were about talking about the importance and role of participatory communication. P-2 says there needs to be respect and residents must be educated about how things are done for communication to achieve its intended purpose, while P-3 emphasised efforts that are needed to help community members to learn about how to properly and professionally table demands in such community forums in order to avoid disruptions and chaos.

Furthermore, the researcher noticed during the interviews, how P-1 (the ward councillor) insisted on always wanting to be present when discussions were held with P-2 and P-3 (i.e., other respondents in the study who are members of his ward committee). This action can be read as a form of intrusiveness and controlling behaviour on the part of the ward councillor. The above-mentioned point was also found and noticed during the interaction with residents in focus-group interviews.

During the data collection process, it was noticed that the level of knowledge between the participants differs, even though some had opportunities to be informed and educated about how things are supposed to happen, they never used the opportunity to their advantage in order to execute their mandate efficiently and learn. They rely and depend on the councillor's wisdom. Even though they work together, P-2's approach is unique where he says they are submissive to the community, this can be seen and viewed as a good strategy where it will allow the group to be close to them and trust them. P-3 supports the above statement, it is evident that the views of residents are important and have space. A good and effective democracy allows for an environment and space for communication and this is evident through the creation of structures that enable the views of different societies. The above responses support Mtshali's (2016:11) argument that for public participation to deepen democracy, participation and communication should be democratic acts which should be used as mechanisms for the enhancement of social cohesion and interaction.

- **Participation**

When it comes to studying the relationship between local citizens and local government officials or representatives, participation becomes an essential methodology to use if we are to scrutinise the extent to which spaces are created for local citizens to have meaningful

engagements in development endeavours. As well as the extent of their involvement in the whole communication process, including in critical stages when decisions about local social change are made (c.f. Molale, 2019; Molale & Fourie, 2022; Mosonik, 2017).

This understanding came into sharp focus during semi-structured interviews when respondents were quizzed on the nature of the involvement of all role-players. With this line of questioning, the researcher wanted to understand who takes the lead, and during which part of the process, so as to gauge the extent to which participation for local citizens is fostered and facilitated by municipal representatives. This question is also predicated by the fact that local community participation is a non-negotiable requirement in the Municipal Systems Act, and municipal representatives, including the ward councillor and his committee are expected to create spaces for the local community of ward 12 in Jouberton to have meaningful participation in meetings that are about pertinent development issues in their area each month, This is done in anticipation for broader municipal public participation forums, such as the one about the development of an Integrated Development Plan (IDP). One of the semi-structured interviewees demonstrated this understanding of how participation should be fostered during community ward meetings but was quick to indicate true community participation is impossible to achieve since the meetings are prone to chaos and destruction, mainly as a result of a lack of proper understanding on the purpose of ward meetings on the part of community members. This line of thought is covered in the interview extract below:

P-1: "We are living in a democracy, so in a democracy you must allow people to participate to understand their frustration and views. But in the community They don't understand processes because they don't go through workshops."

The above response also corroborates findings made by Molale (2019), whose earlier study in the same Matlosana Local Municipality was focused on participatory communication and public participation in municipal IDP processes. Even more recently in a study that looked at developing a framework for participatory communication in public participation processes at another municipality in South Africa, Molale (2021) made a similar observation where municipal officials were expressing frustration over the fact that local community members need to be inducted about what their role is during municipal public participation processes so that they can make meaningful contribution. Furthermore, when asked about how they handle the disruptions since they are required, even by law, to ensure active community participation in ward meetings, the semi-structured interviewee shared some tactics that they apply when faced with such challenges. The following extract presents some of these tactics:

P-1: "When you are in a meeting you need a different approach. We also keep quiet and listen when they are hostile to us, give them enough time to express

themselves. But, it's also a challenge because we also have to speak, but we never silence them, the meetings take four hours."

From the above response, it is clear that there is a strained relationship between community members and municipal representatives (i.e., ward councillor and committee members) which could be attributed as one of the main hindrances to active community participation during ward meetings. Moreover, what appears to be a lack of proper coordination of community meetings is mistaken for a lack of community participation by the interviewee and in such an environment, there seems to be a misunderstanding of what participation is all about. For example, when one explores what participation means from the participatory communication literature within a South African local government context, a central theme that resonates is a prescriptive interpretation of participation that focuses on a rights-based approach, looking at the conditions that need to be set to allow for local citizens. For example, Molale's (2021) PhD study in Rustenburg Local Municipality in South Africa coined a context-specific definition of participation, when conceived from the perspective of public participation in local government's IDP processes. He regards participation as:

"A social process that is continuous and inter-subjective characterised by the establishment of platforms (i.e., invited spaces) where open negotiation and all-inclusive dialogue among equal subjects, are facilitated by universally agreed-upon language choices with the aim of reaching consensus regarding solutions about common development problems. Active and meaningful participation can only be achieved if all who are involved in the process are given the space to reflect on validity claims of truthfulness or fairness, sincerity, socially acceptability, and comprehensibility of one another's utterances so as to avoid perceptions manipulation and coercion of any individual and build rapport for long-term development and social change." (Molale, 2021:167).

From the above definition, it is clear that participation is not just about allowing someone to speak during discussions, but it is a coordinated process that is on-going with the intention of building rapport among all role-players so that there can be time for robust and transparent interactions about the status and quality of life or the environment, as well as what is needed to improve them. Additionally, Molale's (2021) assertion that conflict, confrontations, uncomfortable conversations or even some disagreements are natural occurrences that cannot be avoided in participation, and this thought is also supported by the present study. Granted, participation cannot be viewed as a once-off affair or an event, it is a long-term process that is about building relationships and accountability.

Moreover, in Molale's (2021) above definition, we learn that participation for municipal representatives should be about making sure that community members can see that they are truthful, sincere, and responsive; they are able to provide feedback in time on community needs and inquiries, so they can be trusted. This kind of interpretation is supported by several scholars

who view participation, within the context of participatory communication, as a process that cannot be dissociated from on-going dialogue that takes place when all role-players, especially community members, are made to feel like equal partners and can trust that the development process is undertaken with their best interests at heart. For example, in their work about participatory communication as a key strategy in the construction of citizen Incio et al. (2021), Servaes and Lie (2020), Tufte and Tacchi (2020) all maintain that participation is crucial so that community members' views can be incorporated in deliberations, they should have space to be part of the decision-making process as this will benefit and contribute to the process of building a better society. This is also cemented by Masuku and Jili (2019), who in their work, argued that if participation is viewed as integral to democracy; genuine citizen participation can legitimise the governing role of municipal authorities because they would be seen as a representative government for the people and by the people. Another benefit of participation in municipal public participation processes, as Chagutaah (2014) points out, is that it helps to enhance the importance of cultural identity of local residents because their views could be incorporated in development and social change solutions.

Furthermore, the South African legislative framework encourages public participation. For example, the Municipal System Act (No. 32 of 2000) stipulates that municipalities must foster and "create condition, for local communities to participate in the affairs of their municipalities."

Notwithstanding, all semi-structured interviewees view participation as a means to achieve the instructions set out in local government legislation. Implying that they view participation as a means to achieve desired ends; not an end in itself. For example, another respondent revealed during interviews that in fact, ward meetings serve the purpose of providing a platform for community members to speak about whatever they want, including challenges and development needs. This point can be seen in the interview extract below:

P-2: "We discuss what's important, what the community wants to hear and what they want. The most important thing is what the community wants, their expectations. We attended to their suggestions, e.g., we did something in 2007 (extension 24), now in our administration we managed to do pavement and lights."

But judging by the above response from the second semi-structured interviewee, there seem to be inconsistencies when looking at their understanding of community participation. Their accounts of what transpires during ward meetings is not the same, especially when on the one hand, one respondent says community participation is hindered by chaos and disruptions, while on the other respondents paint a different picture, one that is about how smooth the discussions develop and how active citizens are when they are engaged in meaningful discussions with officials about local development and social change. However, their view of participation as a

means to achieve desired ends is contrary to how participation is interpreted from the perspective of participatory communication. Here various scholars argue against viewing participation in this manner, these include Molale (2021), who redefined participation and not as an end. Similar scholars who share the same view, include Dervin and Huesca, (1997); Naidoo (2010); Imms et al. (2016); Cornwall (2008); Nikkhah and Redzuan (2009).

- **Decision Making**

Decision making is one of the most important concepts in participatory communication. It emanates from how the involvement of local community members is interpreted and understood. For instance, Tufte and Mefalopulo's (2009) typology of participation outlines the four levels of citizen participation where passive participation is conceived as the least desired form of participation. Whereas empowered participation is regarded as the most preferred form, based on the extent to which local citizens are afforded the space to collaborate together with development practitioners, and jointly make decisions on local development and social change efforts. From this theoretical understanding, decision making was chosen as a theme in order to understand who takes the lead in discussions during ward meetings and if local citizens are afforded space in any decision-making process concerning local development plans. When asked about how decisions over development programmes for ward 12 are taken in the whole community participation process, semi-structured interviewees were in agreement with the view that decisions are not taken during ward meetings at all. They gave the impression that the municipal council, which is an executive body at the municipality that comprises of municipal councillors, who are mostly from different political parties, makes the final decisions over which development project will be funded, in which area, when, and for how much. This understanding is illustrated in the following interview extract from one of the respondents:

P-2: "The decision is not taken; we take suggestions to the council We don't want to make empty promises."

Another respondent expressed a similar sentiment when he indicated that after community members have expressed their wishes, it is the prerogative of the ward councillor and his committee to sit down and collate all community remarks at a private meeting and then decide of which projects to prioritise and send to the municipal council. This idea can be seen in the following interview extract:

P-1: "There are some burning issues you can't finalise in a mass meeting. Their involvement is when we write them down, then the next day they are called to the office of the ward councillor whereby we all sit down with the ward committee and talk about, depending on issues, for example, if it is a private matter, we call them privately to talk."

From the above response, an impression is made that local community members are not empowered to make any decisions about local development and social change efforts as part of the municipal development processes and procedures. These impressions corroborate findings made in other research studies that have been conducted in the South African local government sphere, when the issue of participation and decision making are explored (Molale, 2019; Molale, 2021; Mtshali, 2016; Rasila & Mudau, 2013).

Additionally, it could be argued that decisions may also not be taken during ward meetings because, as semi-structured interviewees have indicated, they tend to be disrupted and are mostly not finalised. Hence, the councillor and his ward committee members end up finding a reason why they should hold subsequent private meetings where they would take decisions on what they think the community needs, what would be prioritised and which ideas on development projects will be sent to the municipal council for consideration. These sentiments were also shared by the community where they said that they sometimes just see things and development happening in their area without their knowledge.

- **Empowerment**

Empowerment, within the context of citizen participation in municipal government, can be seen as a process whereby individuals, communities and organisations gain confidence, self-esteem, and authority to articulate their concerns and take actions to address them (c.f. Molale & Fourie, 2022; Adebayo & Butcher, 2022; Rasyid & Nasution, 2022). Empowered people are motivated to change negative issues and obstacles that confront them into positive issues from which they derive some benefits. This is the kind of interpretation that led the researcher to choose empowerment as one of the themes used during this empirical leg of the study. The semi-structured interviewees were asked about how they perceive the role that they play, as well as the role played by community members, during ward meetings. This was to expose the underlying power dynamics that take place and to check if they, if anything, are aware of how power affects the participatory process. This is especially the case when we think about how, in Tufte and Mefalopoulos's (2009) typology of participation, for example, power that local community members have in development processes is a determinant factor of whether there is, in one extreme case, passive participation, or empowered participation, on the other. The ward councillor had an interesting response quizzed about these power relations, their roles and those of the community in ward meetings:

P-1: "Most of the time the councillor is the chairperson of the meeting. We have secretary who takes the minutes. First, we draft the agenda, a proposal agenda, as a ward committee for the meeting, and the community will bring two to three items.

We start with the burning issues before we start with the agenda; after the chair has spoken then we deal with matters in a categorical way. Yes, people have a voice, it's a two-way meeting, but a conclusion must be reached."

From the above extract, it is evident that the ward councillor assumes a higher authority and takes the lead in all deliberations during ward meetings. What is also interesting is the fact that although local residents do have a 'voice' during these meetings, it is limited and controlled by the ward councillor in that they are told when to participate and when to raise issues. It would also seem, from the above extract, that the officials view themselves as the custodians of public participation in ward meetings and that they are the authorities, who should be in charge of the process. A similar sentiment was also shared by another semi-structured interviewee:

P-3: "Know what is going on in your ward, so people can know about what we have for them based on what they have, provide feedback, and also inform them on what's possible and impossible."

The underlying power dynamics are exposed in the above interview extract. It shows that local citizens are not decision-makers when it comes to deliberations in ward meetings. As the officials stated, they have the prerogative to inform local citizens of what is "possible and impossible," insofar as the needs that they raise are concerned.

In addition, the researcher observed that empowerment, for the officials, is about what they should do to improve the skills that local citizens have, looking at their need for training. Put in another way, semi-structured interviewees believe they would be empowering local citizens if they embark in programmes where they facilitate learning opportunities to promote a sense of responsibility and accountability among them. This point properly finds expression in the following interview extract with one of the semi-structured interviewees:

P-3: "Educate people. Most of them don't know how it works, they know that what they want they must get."

Similarly, all the officials had a perception that there is a lack of education amongst residents in ward 12 which could be one of the reasons why they believe community members need to be empowered through training opportunities so that they know how to conduct themselves during ward meetings. However, this assertion should be approached with caution since one does not need formal education in order to be an effective participant in municipal public participation processes. In addition, such an argument is faulty because a community is composed of people with different talents, skills and abilities, for instance, in ward 12, there are teachers, nurses, and police officers. What was equally interesting was how one of the interviewees during semi-structured interviews took responsibility by stating that there was room for improvement on their part when it comes to understanding their role:

P-1: "Leaders need to improve by educating themselves about processes, improve our availability, and give them answers."

But it should be noted that although skills and training are essential, even for community members, the perspective that officials have regarding empowerment is rather inconsistent with how empowerment is understood within the participatory communication literature. For example, Tufte and Mefalopulos's (2009) view of empowered participation is about providing local citizens with enough latitude to make meaningful contributions to the development process, including in making decisions about local development efforts. This interpretation is supported by several studies when public participation is explored from a local government perspective (Mathekga & Buccus, 2006; Booyesen, 2009; Smith, 2011; Nembambula, 2014; Fau, 2015; Molale, 2019; Molale & Fourie, 2022). This notion was rejected by the semi-structured interviews, when they argued that decisions are not made during ward meetings but are taken by the municipal council. This is serious disconnect found between what is argued in the literature versus the contradicting views held by the officials.

4.3 Findings from Focus-Group Interviews

4.3.1 Presentation and Analysis of Data from Focus Group Interviews to Address the Study's Third Research Question

The study's third research question is:

What are the perceptions of role-players (community members) regarding the nature of participatory communication during ward meetings?

Similar questions to the ones posed to semi-structured interviewees were also presented to focus group respondents. The aim was to answer the study's third research question and all four themes were used, namely, facilitation of communication, participation, dialogue, and empowerment. Presentation and analysis of the data gathered from focus group interviews in line with these four themes is provided in the sections below.

- **Facilitation of communication**

In total, three groups were part of this data collection process, which was conducted in a space of two months. There were two groups with eight members each and one group which comprised of seven members. These numbers are consistent with the general rule of thumb relating to how many people should be in a focus group. A promise was made to the participants that their real names will not be used when analysing and presenting data. Therefore, throughout this section all the participants' pseudonyms will be used as a way to

protect and mask their identity, in the previous section pseudonyms like P-1 were used to mask identities of semi-structured interviewees, now the researcher will identify focus-group participants with pseudonyms such as "P-A" or "P-B".

The question relating to the facilitation of communication during ward meetings was discussed with the focus-group respondents. The respondents had differing views based on their understanding. For instance, one of the respondents mentioned how municipal representatives used to employ social media tools to invite community members to ward meetings, but these efforts, although they did not favour all residents due to accessibility problems for some, have since died down:

P-W: "They once used WhatsApp, but not all of us have smartphones. Here there is no relationship Last time there was a project here, we didn't know anything about it ... but if there were meetings that are accommodative, things would be different. Service delivery is poor."

Other respondents confirmed what semi-structured interviewees said about using loud hailers to invite residents to ward meetings, although the respondent was not satisfied with this method because it does not reach all community members:

P-Y: "Hailing but it doesn't reach people. The route used doesn't cater for all, not everyone hears the invitation ... there is no strategy plan."

P-X: "They once used WhatsApp, but not all of us have smart phones."

P-Z: "He does use WhatsApp prior to a meeting that is happening but there is not enough time, short notices. People don't attend because it's always short notice. It is important to be heard and raise an issue that affects us at this meeting. There should be mass communication because not everyone has smart phones, you must accommodate everyone Loud hailers but they don't reach people; the route used doesn't cater for all. Not everyone hears the invitation there is no strategic plan."

The respondents were further asked about, other than the communication that takes place before ward meetings (e.g., invites and platforms used), how, in their view, was the communication structured during ward meetings. One of the respondents was quick to raise their hand and indicate that the meetings are riddled with chaos and disruptions due to fights that erupt as a result of despondent community members who blame the ward councillor and his committee for neglecting them, not providing them with timeous feedback on previously raised issues, and for not hosting frequent ward meetings:

P-B: "Well I don't see the importance of having ward meetings, because when our councillor calls these meetings there are always fights during the meetings, even if a meeting is called after a long time This is supposed to be a gathering where we meet with our councillor to talk about things that affect us. We always hear

development is coming, for example, like we just saw this road been constructed without be consulted."

This view seemed to partly corroborate a similar assertion made by one of the semi-structured interviewees on how chaotic ward meetings tend to be, but it contradicted the second part of the official's view that the reason why meetings are disrupted is because some community members attend meetings while intoxicated with alcohol. Other focus group respondents nodded their heads in agreement when respondent P-B was speaking. In fact, another respondent interjected and made a similar point:

P-C: "Ward meetings are where we give each other [advice] but here, where we stay ... there have never been [productive] ward meetings ... Like before we used to have meetings, but lately it has turned out to be meetings where we fight each other, then we end up just leaving and going home one by one."

Although municipal representatives and community members agree on the fact that meetings tend to be chaotic and are frequently disrupted, there seems to be an observable contradiction and disconnect between views held by the two groups on reasons as to why meetings degenerate.

However, in another focus group interview, respondents seemed to have an acute understanding of what purpose ward meetings should serve. From that discussion, respondents seemed to contradict the views shared in other focus-group discussions as well as those held by semi-structured interviewees. They gave the impressions that meetings are constructive based on how communication is facilitated:

P-D: "Ward meetings support a meeting of residents. When residents have a crisis, they take it up with the councillor, so when a councillor doesn't entertain that crisis that means we don't have a functional ward."

P-E: "A ward meeting is a gathering of a leader of the ward and community to talk about the progress of the ward, notice of improvement, and all the possible productive things done to all make you as the community to gather under one roof to talk about how to build your ward. [It is also the place to talk about understanding where there were failures.]"

P-F: "A ward meeting is a gathering of a councillor and residents, where he makes them gather to talk about things that affect them in terms of IDP, where, as residents, we talk about what we think we need, like here, we don't have a school, and here is where there should be communication between councillor and the community."

P-G: "Ward meetings are gatherings where one comes to opine about where we think there should be improvement, it's not always about complaining but it's about taking part. Not complaining to reveal what we think is good for us or something that can make our ward better."

These kinds of responses gave the researcher the impression that this group seemed to be affiliated to the same political party that the ward councillor and some members of the committee belong to. This is because they seemed to be supportive to the ward councillor and they did not speak ill of him or even reveal anything that seemed to be putting the councillor and his committee in a bad light. Such an observation did not surprise the researcher, given how diverse the community is and it was unavoidable to have these kinds of groups, especially because it was the municipal officials who were gatekeepers and they are the ones who gave consent for the research to come into this community in the first place. Secondly, the researcher already anticipated that there would be groups like this after it was evident in another focus-group sessions as well as in semi-structured interviews that the ward councillor would either want to attend those sessions himself, while in other cases he would send people on his behalf to come and listen to what questions the researcher was asking the respondents and how they answered.

This is similar to what was experienced in the semi-structured interview where he kept on monitoring what was said. Such behaviour was seen by the respondents as a spying tactic which was rather uncomfortable for the researcher and the respondents. For instance, in one focus-group discussion with community members in extension 24, respondents at first expressed discomfort to participate in the discussions because they were worried that the ward councillor would either come to attend and listen to the discussions or send his so-called 'spies' to come and listen in. After the researcher allayed their fear and showed them his interview Q-sheet, they were at ease and agreed for the discussion to ensue. After about 20-30 minutes had lasted and the interview was continuing, a group of about four young people who seemed to be passing by the open area in extension 24, where we were standing, suddenly stood a few metres away from us. This agitated one of the respondents, who drew the researcher's attention to the group standing a few metres away, stating that he knew one of the young people and that, as he put it, they were the ward councillor's "errand boys" who were sent to come and listen to the discussions.

In another focus-group discussion, respondents blamed the ward councillor and his committee for calling ward meetings too late, arguing that they sometimes fail to attend such meetings, not because they do not want to, but because meetings are called one day before or even on the same day. Thus not giving them proper chance to cancel their appointments and attend these meetings:

P-P: "Some other time we are not given enough time to prepare for the meeting. You will hear a speaker passing that there is a meeting on this day, and that is not fair because we do have commitments. We need to be given an opportunity be

invited with a circular in time, and they should ensure that everybody has received the message.”

P-R: “They invite people to a meeting they don’t want them to attend. Loudspeaker go around but the meeting will be today The timing of this meeting tends to inconvenience our daily lives because it’s a sudden meeting.”

In addition, another respondent complained that when meetings are called, the times and dates usually clash with his work schedules, and this is the main reason why he fails to attend these meetings. He is mostly at work during those times. These responses contradict the general impression that semi-structured interviewees have about what they regard as a lack of apathy and disinterest from community members when it comes to attending these meetings.

P-R: “Participating in a ward meeting is very important but we are denied the opportunity. We are not afforded time to also opine regarding our grievances and concerns. It’s important to take part in these meetings; if they gave us a chance a lot of things would have been achieved. There isn’t participation; they come with their pre-cooked agenda and decisions. It doesn’t matter if you want to take part, to them; it’s a waste of time.”

From the response of the second group, they preferred and seemed to enjoy talking about the nature of communication. All participants held the very same view that this meeting, when they happen, end in fights. These sentiments can be linked to what the P-1 said that people came drunk to the meeting. The researcher could not help but poke further during the discussion and noticed that there is element truth to what was said regarding the nature of communication not being unbearable for all those who participate. Here the blame can be laid on those who come drunk, but also it can be seen as a sign that people don’t take this meeting seriously. The researcher also picked up that there was no remorse from the side of the residents. They never denied the allegation put forward that they come to meeting drunk.

Discussion around what ward meetings are played an important role in assisting the researcher determine the respondents’ understanding of the subject matter. It also played a huge role in assisting the researcher to determine what kind of communication occurs at these meetings. Municipalities are pillars of democracy where sometimes people find politics to be a participative process. Nonetheless, P-P from the third focus group interview raised valid point when it comes to facilitation of participation, arguing that they are not treated fairly during ward meetings despite showing keen interest in the issues affecting their community. Just like a majority of participants, he felt like they were deliberately disadvantaged by the officials who do not give them adequate time to prepare for meetings by announcing them way in advance.

The researcher further noticed that over and above the same sentiment shared among the respondents, those who do attend ward meetings felt that even the agenda items put forward for discussion seem pre-planned and decision are manipulated by the officials. Furthermore, P-R went on to further state that decisions are pre-cooked and the officials were not open to alternative views that they try to raise. The respondents attributed this situation as one of the reasons why most meetings end up disintegrating into chaos. This assertion also contradicted the views that were shared by the officials regarding some of the reasons why meetings degenerate into chaos. Semi-structured interviewees put the blame on community members who attend meetings while drunk and also those who did not understand how ward meetings work, arguing that they need to be trained on how to be professional. Not once did they also indicate that sometimes they clash because of dissatisfaction demonstrated by community members who feel coerced and manipulated. To be fair to the officials, however, it is not a foregone conclusion that they may be aware of their actions, or they are deliberately manipulating community members during these meetings.

The understanding of communication for social change in the context of development is complex and vast, it has a deeper meaning especially when it comes to application, and it is multidisciplinary. Tufte and Tacchi (2020) emphasises the point that when it comes to communication as a process in development it has underlying priorities. This is shown by the response of residents who feel excluded from the communication process while on the other hand officials think and conduct themselves differently from the views of residents.

Another outstanding observation during the discussion is how hopeless the community feels and describes those they depend on. There is an obvious response that they are fed up and want nothing to do with this administration of the current ward committee members. This has led to them not even having hope in the process of ward meeting entirely. The question that comes to mind is what is going to happen when there is introduction of new ward committee members. One thing is for sure, there is consensus that currently and in the past five years nothing has happened that has made them trust municipal officials, especially the ward councillor and his committee. This has an impact on how they view their ward and municipality. They argue that if they want something to happen, they must voice their displeasure via service delivery protest.

- **Participation**

Participation at local level has been plagued with stubborn problems, and this can be amongst others the challenge to resources, power struggles between councillor, ward committee, and the residents, and even political differences together with conduct. Through the observation made

during the data collection process, there is evidence of a power struggle amongst those involved. According to Chaligha (2013) active participation in any structure or setting at local governance is important because it better the quality of life, the concept of participation is crucial when it comes to decision making during meetings. This sentiment on participation is also shared by other scholars, particularly those whose studies are directly related to public participation and participatory communication in local government (Msibi & Penzhorn, 2010; Molale, 2019; Molale & Fourie, 2022).

Some participants asked not to respond to some of the questions, but extracts were taken from those who wanted to speak freely. Speaking about democracy, Xhakaza (2019) argues that democracy is important and possible when the community is afforded the opportunity to “actively and meaningfully” take part and contribute to their development. He also agrees with the phenomenon that democracy should be applied in all instances and this was considered when this request was made by others.

The question related to how residents understood participation and how it took place during the ward meeting was discussed with the focus group respondents. The respondents had similar views based on their understanding. For instance, one of the respondents mentioned how these meetings never achieve their intended purpose, and how they end because of disagreements and fights, this doesn't favour anyone:

P-I: “Yes, these meetings are supposed to achieve a certain purpose, but in many cases these meetings never reach an end when they are held. There is an agreement because in most cases, like we already explained, there are misunderstandings and fights We, as a community, participate from a frustration point of view, and then those in charge, they humble themselves when we engage because the community is frustrated. Our leaders must humble themselves to show that they understand our concerns. In most cases you find that the one that addresses when there are some who are frustrated, he also becomes frustrated.”

This view demonstrates the extent of dissatisfaction existent amongst residents with regards to these meetings. P-I acknowledges that there is participation of some sort. He states that participants engage from a point of frustration which leads to them arguing, and in the end fighting. This has a negative impact because it makes residents see these meetings as a war zone, and it leads to some fearing to attend. When posing the question, the researcher noticed how the participants focused more on talking about fights and how the leaders seemed to not be humble when engaging with community members about the state of local development and social change during ward meetings. This was a clear indication that community members feel marginalised by the officials and there is passive participation on their part. The following extracts are indicative of these frustrations they raised:

P-P: "There is a level of participation when the meeting starts but as time goes on the meeting doesn't achieve its intended goal. That is what we come here for. Maybe all parties, we, should be patient when it comes to issues. When I don't like something I mustn't disrupt the meeting; that's not good. Let us give everyone a platform to express themselves. Yes, one or two people are given a chance but from there it get messed up."

P-Q: "It's 50/50 it's not 100%. What I know is that when you address a meeting you must have time to give people a platform to also talk and express their feelings, but sometimes in the meeting, other things, they come as if we have already discussed them somewhere, in most cases. And the main problem is that the meetings never finish, so the meetings don't end, some issues are not addressed, and that's our problem. For example, if there is an important issue that was brought by one of the residents that can help. But meetings don't go well, people become short tempered."

P-R: "The councillor must be close to residents and understand their plight. We need to have meetings regularly, because when we do hold regular meetings, things come up that were supposed to be addressed, but because there is no regular meeting, the ward committee must meet with the councillor sit down and talk, draft a yearly program that has an agenda, and be given enough time to prepare for the meeting. If we can get along, all of us, we will achieve a lot of things."

Responding to the question on participation P-Q also touched on how it can be improved. When uttering his words stating that the gap must be closed, but the researcher couldn't help but notice that they expected the effort to only come from the councillor. Even though valid points were raised, especially talking about getting other participants, who agreed with him that the mood could get better? They acknowledged that participation does exist but needed to be improved and that's a good sign, but for the researcher it came across as if they sometimes don't see themselves being in the wrong:

P-R: "When we talked about our understanding of ward meetings, participation is very weak because when the chair of the meeting, being the councillor comes to the community, he comes with a pre-cooked decision. Just to come and say it's time to pay the rent, and then they don't come back with feedback about things that were raised by the residents. The choice you are given you are driven towards. You don't really express yourself, e.g., our councillor must employ the Batho Pele Principle, that is, if there is something people must participate, and there must be communication. Now, if residents don't get a chance to participate, and you as a councillor, you come and say let's talk about the thing you as a councillor want to discuss ... and first residents don't know where it comes from, that becomes a problem. Participation is poor."

P-R is from the same group as P-Q, which had more males than their counterparts. His sentiment corroborated the previous participant's view that indeed participation does exist, but complained that it was weak meaning that is not at the level that is productive. During his response other participants clapped their hands showing that they support what he said. The

researcher noticed that he was a trusted figure, showed a level of understanding on many principles of governance, was very articulate, and could express himself at ease. At some point, his conduct was suspicious with regards to influencing other participants, as P-R kept on consulting other members of his group.

Continuing to draw experience of how the community in ward 12 view participation, the third group shared their own understanding on what this phenomenon is and how, as residents, they perceive their participation in ward meetings. In the extracts below, one of the respondents (P-S) differed with some of the participants, as she remained on the position that there were no meetings held at all. So how could there be participation when meetings are not held? The researcher noticed that she was disappointed by how events unfolded in the ward; how municipal officials only come to them with empty promises, or how they sometimes see contractors being brought to do development project in the area without their knowledge. She emphasised that fights are caused by some of the underlying problems in the ward which remain unresolved because, in her view, meetings do not take place at all. Although some respondents acknowledged that some meetings take place, they pointed out that they degenerate. They also partly agreed with P-S on the reasons why participation is relatively minimal and why there are some confrontations between community members and municipal representatives who are supposed to facilitate public participation in ward meetings:

P-S: "How can we take part, because meeting don't take place? There are always fights there. How are we supposed to take part when we don't have the knowledge about how things are done?"

P-U: "There is no participation. There are the ones that take decision for us. They just come to inform us about the decision they have taken."

The above comments regarding participation not existing at this meeting were supported by P-U who concurred with P-S. For the researcher it was very interesting that the only two females in the group never shied away from mentioning that for them, participation did not exist. P-U interestingly supported her first question on participation, and when asked to talk about how participation can be improved, she stuck to her answer saying, "There is no participation." This confused the researcher, but later the researcher realised that for many at ward 12 this could be because all hope has been lost. The response can be interpreted in two ways: sticking to one answer and hopelessness. P-U was amongst the participants that kept talking on the side-line with P-R. Ordinary people are drawn to expressing themselves whether there is a platform or not, even when it is done without any choice and through frustration. There a clear indication of their dissatisfaction (Mtshali, 2016). This was also picked up in another focus-group interview discussion, as demonstrated by the extracts below:

P-W: "There is no participation. They use loud hailers to call meetings, and it's not right. We prefer SMSs or WhatsApp, and they should prepare us ahead of time, not these sudden meetings."

P-Z: "Honestly there is no participation. We just stand there because they also have their own people that side with them. We never have any say at meetings, there not even an attendance register."

P-H: "Mostly we participate. We do participate, but people are fearful (hints at violence)."

However, there was a level of trust, as other members kept coming to hear what she was saying and they kept nodding their heads while she was talking. Overall, she was given a chance to speak. As mentioned earlier, the researcher noticed that there are other members of the community who kept attending our sessions, seeking to want to hear what was being discussed. When invited to join in the conversations, instead of making other respondents uncomfortable, they declined the offer and left.

P-T: "There is no participation. They use a loud hailer and, sometimes, it doesn't work. Even at meetings the speakers do not work."

The issue of participation was further investigated by talking to other groups, and they also shared the same sentiment on how important it is. They desired to be part of the meeting and be allowed to participate. Van Belle and Cupido (2013) argue that in most cases the aggravation of citizens comes from how they are treated. They observed that public participation at local level fails because of barriers that limit it, and that makes participants angry. Frustration was evident in the face and conduct of P-T. He came across as a person who is angered by how things are done at ward 12, going to the extent that they are not taken seriously:

P-P: "It is important to be given a chance to participate at the meeting because I'm the one who is a resident and stays in this ward. I'm the one who experiences and knows what we need as residents. For instance, in our ward or area we don't have sport facilities, and when your sport addresses a lot of things like crime ... we deserve to participate in this meeting."

P-U: "I have the right to participate. We are never given a chance to opine, these meetings are called to discuss issues that affect us."

P-J: "I have never experienced anything constructive at these meetings because there are always an argument and fighting there. The meeting never goes anywhere, it always ends in fights."

P-K: "Our meetings never end well, that's the problem we face. Even when you raise a valuable point it never ends well."

P-L: "Their problem is something can be discussed but it ends with a fight. We never reach a conclusion. That is what I have noticed."

P-L: We are left with no answers , in most cases they hijack ideas from government, they always talk intention (promises) but what has caused meetings not to be held its because of outstanding promises that haven't be delivered

Another observation that the researcher made is that this community feels their representatives failed them. They have lost interest in these meetings and only attend to be spectators of the councillor and the ward committee members. P-M went further to say that the majority of the ward meetings fail; this is a clear indication that during these meetings communication, participation, consultation, and empowerment are non-existent. Describing the process, P-M's choice of words like 'hijack' and 'No answers,' detail that, when it comes to ward 12 meetings, there is an authoritative, top-down approach. This in the context of ward meetings can be seen as abuse of power.

According to Mbhele (2017), this has a possibility to lead to alternative measures by the community which might be violent service delivery protests. P-P's response reveals that he yearns to participate because he is a member of the community and believes that he knows what they need as residents that live in this area. In supporting his argument, he emphasises the point by mentioning things that the community needs to get rid of social ills, e.g. having sport facilities.

Even though according to the officials, there is progress when it comes to development in the ward, all have failed when it comes to others. The ward is facing challenges from lack of accountability as mentioned above, to poor attendance, no procedures and experience, lack of participation, disempowerment, lack of communication, lack of resources, and a lack of accountability and information. The demand for citizen participation remains a central issue and that will never change unless there is change of attitude from all parties.

- **Decision Making**

The decision-making process during ward meeting has to do with public involvement, empowerment, and participatory communication. As was the case during the semi-structured interviews, decision making was an important theme during focus-group interviews, because the researcher needed to gauge: the extent to which community members appraise their level of

involvement in ward meetings, what their role is, how they can make meaningful contributions, whether there are any improvements to the current processes insofar as their role is concerned, and who, if anyone, makes decisions during such meetings. Respondents in the first focus-group session were mostly of the view that they feel marginalised and that the ward councillor and his committee seem to come to the meeting having already decided on what they think is needed in the community. Thus, leaving no room for their submissions to be considered. The second focus-group session complained about meeting not serving their purpose and not being constructive. The third group questioned the perception that they participate in the communication process, and felt that this was not empowering them. Just like in the semi-structured interviews, decision making was chosen as a theme in order to understand if residents are afforded space in any decision-making process concerning local development plans, and how decisions are taken according to them as mentioned:

P-T: "They come with their own decision that has nothing to do with us. We never get a chance, and we have no power to make them account."

P-Z: "They are dictating. It's never about decisions, it's a dictating meeting. The little power we have is taken from us."

In another focus-group discussion, there was generally a similar sentiment shared by respondents regarding how community members feel marginalised and that decisions are taken on their behalf by municipal officials. For example, in the extracts below, one of the respondents (P-R) argued that they need to be more involved in decision-making processes about local development projects during ward meetings. This is a genuine concern, which demonstrates what Ali and Sonderling (2017) said, that one of the impediments of participatory development and a corollary cause for the failure of development is being excluded from making decisions:

P-S: "It's important to take part, because if we don't talk or participate, they won't know what our challenges are."

P-R: "Getting involved will help because it will advance the need and understanding of the effectiveness of the role of government, and to also understand how issues that can affect us are prioritised, because we can't accommodate every issue."

Looking at the above interview extracts, community members show a genuine concern for how they feel left out and how they are not making significant inputs during ward meetings. This view ironically supports what the semi-structured interviewees said about how they do not allow for community members to make any decisions, and that decision making is performed by the municipal council. Notwithstanding this is antithetical to the dictates of empowered participation in the literature. For example, in a study which investigated if public communication activities occur and the possible benefit during the exchange of messages, Ndinisa (2017: 36) argues

that despite the evolution, the original purpose of public participation still remains that of ensuring that community members are afforded an active role in deliberations, including decision making. Auriacombe (2020) regards participation as a very important element of good governance. Sebola (2017) regards it as a concept which is dependent on different contexts but it is an involvement of people in solving a problem collectively. Drawing from Auriacombe (2020) the process of decision making is categorised by participation, democracy, and a partnership amongst the community and municipality in making changes.

P-Z: "People get their views heard, because that's where we can change things. You listen to different views from people about the challenges that need to be addressed."

The view from the last member of the last group, clearly shows that interviewees have lost hope. They still believe that if things are to change, they must be allowed genuine space to participate by raising views and those views being attended to thoroughly. The above comment is supported by the views of the fifth participant, who is from the second group, he says everything they complain about must be attended to, and there must be a change of conduct. In his view he complains about being side-lined, meaning that they feel ill-treated by the leadership:

P-M: "We are always left with no answers. In most cases they hijacked ideas from government. They always talk intention but what has caused meetings not to be held is because of outstanding promises that haven't been delivered."

P-P: "There is a level of participation when the meeting starts, but as time goes on the meeting doesn't achieve its intended goal. That is what we come here for. Maybe all parties should be patient when it comes to issues. When I don't like something, I mustn't disrupt the meeting; that's not good. Let us give everyone a platform to express themselves. (Follow-up question: are you given that platform currently?). Yes, one or two people are given a chance but from there it gets messed up."

P-Y: "There is not relationship. The last time there was a project here, we didn't know about it, but if there were meetings that had been accommodative things would be different. Service delivery is very poor."

P-R: "In most cases we don't even arrive at the decision-making part. There is an opening, they know meetings never continue. Hence, they call meetings. When he comes, he makes an opening. Before we even arrive at agreeing on something the meeting is disturbed."

P-W: "We have issues of drugs and employment and everyone has different issues, but they never give us a chance."

In summation, the above sentiments held by the focus-group respondents presented a generally negative perception that they have about how they are treated by municipal representatives. It was evident that they felt like they were not taken seriously by the municipal representatives. The fact that there is no consensus and agreement regarding participation between residents and officials puts the functions and the role of the ward in jeopardy. This conduct may lead to communication failing, thus further severing the relationship between local community members and ward leaders. At ward 12, respondents mostly are of the view that they are not being empowered because municipal representatives deliberately deprive them of the opportunities to make meaningful contributions during decisions and they are not allowed to make decision over local development affairs. Freire (2021) argues that in a just world, dialogue, which is approached from the perspective that it is the facilitation of genuine discourse, is a means of empowerment. Molale (2019:61-63) as well as Molale and Fourie (2022) also support the above statement as they describe empowerment as amongst the concepts that are key in participatory communication. They advance an argument that empowerment can happen if people are equal partners in the development process, and if they are given an opportunity to participate and make meaningful contributions to the local development agenda.

- **Empowerment**

Empowerment, for focus-group respondents, focuses on how they are made to feel, if their views are considered in the decision-making value chain. Although the semi-structured interviewees focused on what skillsets and areas community members needed to improve on, focus-group respondents indicated that they see empowerment as being offered by the authority so that there could be active citizen participation in ward meetings. Most respondents were of the view that they are made to feel like they do not matter. For example, some respondents raised concerns about always being side-lined by being deprived a chance to participate. They bluntly stated meetings never take place. This, in itself, deprived them any chance of being part of the meeting.

As was the cases during the semi-structured interviews, empowered people are motivated to change negative issues and obstacles that confront them into positive issues from which they derive some benefits. This is the kind of interpretation that led the researcher to choose empowerment as one of the themes used during this empirical leg of the study. The interviewees were asked about how they perceive the role that they play, as well as the role

played by officials, during ward meetings. This was to expose the underlying power dynamics that take place and to check if they, if anything, are aware of how power affects the participatory process. This is especially the case when we think about how, in Tufte and Mefalopoulos's (2009) typology of participation, for example, power that local community members have in development processes is a determinant factor of whether there is, in one extreme case, passive participation, or empowered participation, on the other. P-R had an interesting response when quizzed about these power relations:

P-R: "We are marginalised. Looking at the quality of meetings, they are not accommodative of our views or feelings. These meetings could be productive if they allow for the exchange of ideas between us. They should allow all members of the ward to have a say on how to address our economic issues. The whole ward is marginalised, they have their own people."

From this above sentiment, residents felt belittled, excluded, limited, and are not afforded a chance in the form of power to make contributions and to be made to feel that their views matter or are significant. This view is also supported by P-S below. This kind of behaviour makes them feel that they are not empowered with the space to make meaningful contributions during meetings. They feel marginalised and valueless. P-S further states that she is resorting to leaving, as this meeting never achieves or serves its intended role according to legislation.

P-S: "They don't afford us a chance. For when I started having an interest, people have never been called regularly and afforded a chance to speak. The meeting never serves its purposes, if there is one. I always leave because I don't want to get hurt."

P-Z: "They are dictating; it's never about decisions. It's a dictating meeting, the little power we have is taken from us."

There is little accountability as the one in charge and person who is depended on, keeps passing the blame. However, the fact that some residents during the focus-group interviews did highlight that some of the community members disrupt the meetings and attend drunk should not be ignored. This, therefore, resulted in the researcher getting an impression that there was a form of manipulation and deception by both participants during the data collection process.

But this also has a power play at hand where no one is taking responsibility, and not to forget that during the semi-structured interviews some officials did give an impression that the power lies with them, hence, they make decision. The researcher got the impression that opinions of the community members are just noted, this makes sense as to why the residents feel they are not taken seriously by their leaders, they feel these meetings have no purpose in their daily lives. P-Z says they feel oppressed.

4.4 Concluding remarks

The purpose of this chapter is aimed at providing results and the discussion of the findings, and to address research questions two and three (see Section 1.4.2-1.4.3.), namely, “How do councillors and ward committee members in Matlosana Local Municipality facilitate communication platforms/channels in light of community participation in ward meetings?” and, “What are the perceptions of role-players (i.e. community members) regarding the nature of participatory communication during ward meetings?”

For the second research question, the study made the following findings relating to the views espoused in the semi-structured interviews:

- On facilitation of communication
- On participation
- On decision making
- On empowerment

For the third, and last, research question, the following findings were discovered by the study in relation to the perceptions held by focus group interviewees:

- On facilitation of participation
- On participation
- On decision making
- On empowerment

In addition, to study and understand challenges of participation, various views need to be considered. This is what is meant by the need to capture multiple constructions of reality, which is a constructivist paradigmatic view of the world chosen for the present study. The majority of the respondents indicated that there is indeed a huge challenge when it comes to participation, communication, and empowerment during ward meetings. During the analysis of their responses, there was a consensus from residents and their leaders around the difficulties they all experience, especially when meetings degenerate and are plunged into chaos. During these instances, the disruptions that occur threaten the progress that should be made, because

meetings end up being cancelled and they fail to achieve their intended purpose. In addition, both sides are putting the blame on each other.

Facilitation of citizen participation in the context of communication for social change is a serious issue and challenge at grassroots level. Participation is essential in deepening and ensuring participatory democracy. It is encouraged in various legislations of South Africa, e.g., Municipal System Act (Act 32 of 2000) and the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (see South Africa 1996, 2000). The researcher's experience during the data collection process shows that community members in ward 12 do not enjoy active and genuine participation in the municipal affairs through ward meetings.

Additionally, the process highlighted the importance of the role of councillor and the ward committee members as important in the lives of ordinary people, and there is evidence that this is lacking at ward 12. Ward committee members serve as a link between residents and the officials; therefore, they are required to foster communication, participation, and engagement through a proper facilitation of proceedings during the ward meeting for the purpose of public participation. In reality and from observations made by the researcher this was not the case. There is a clear indication that ward committee members prefer to be closer to the officials than to ordinary people, and this affects how they are perceived. They come across as working for the councillor and not the people. Another observation made was that the majority of the participants during the data collection period and process (residents) in ward 12 do not know their representative (ward committee members).

The councillor regarded as the chairperson of the ward came across as a person who has lost interest in listening to the complaints and needs of his ward members. He seems to be frustrated by the never-changing conduct of the residents in the meeting. Through observation, he also came across as a dictator. During some of the interviews the councillor sent those close to him to spy on what the residents were saying, and that created discomfort, another issue that came out during the semi-structured interview is: he kept on insisting to be part of the meeting sometimes telling ward committee members what to say. This came across as a dictator wanting to control the narrative regarding the issue of participatory communication.

It is clear that as much as there is a certain form of communication in ward 12, in its nature it is facing challenges. There is a lack of skills, education, and expertise on those in charge to guide those who are in need and depend on them, passing the blame is the order of the day. Here things are done one way and that is the councillor's way.

4.5 REFLEXIVITY: The subjective experience of the researcher in the process of this whole study

Conducting this research study was very challenging, especially with regards to finding participants for the research during the COVID-19 pandemic and nationwide lockdown imposed by the government as a mitigating factor to curb the spread of the infectious deadly virus. Despite repeated disappointments from municipal representatives in the office of the municipality, especially from the office of the speaker and the mayor, my inquisitiveness assisted as a motivating factor to ensure I pushed harder as I was passionate with the study. The views of all participants were illuminating and interesting. Amongst what I have gathered during this study, challenges at ward meetings, especially ward 12, will remain until all participants find each other and learn the art of communication. Intervention is highly needed here.

Conducting this research study has been enlightening and fulfilling for me. I get a sense of academic achievement as I have learned so much, which, hopefully, will result in practical solutions. Much work is needed regarding participatory communication at local level.

And in overseeing the study, I have learned a lot from my supervisor. Dr Molale pushed me beyond a point I never thought I could reach. I managed to learn new things in the field, from various research methodologies, to different schools of thought when it comes to research. This has really assisted in understanding academia as a whole, and appreciate the work by other scholars. He tested my limits which encouraged me to go beyond limits and reach new heights I never knew I could achieve; this assisted in building my confidence. The late conversation we had encouraged me to realise my capabilities when it comes to pushing myself. This research study couldn't have been the way it is, if it weren't for my supervisor who ensured that, at this stage in my life, I indeed understand my hidden potential. I wish to take time and thank my supervisor, Dr Molale, for his effort in keeping me on my toes at critical times, especially during the time I was hijacked and kidnapped while on my way to attend school. Your insights and selfless heart has sharpened my work in no small measure. I am also irredeemably grateful for your sacrifices especially the late telephonic conversation and morning talks we had. You have shaped my thinking about life in general.

CHAPTER 5 SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Overview

Now that the previous chapter (four) has presented the themes, categories, and concepts which emerged from the data collection process and has given interpretation of the findings of the study. This Chapter will conclude this study by providing the summary and conclusion derived from the Topic which was to probe -The Nature of participation in ward meetings. Chapter five will also conclude the study by also discussing the recommendation that have emerged from the analysis of the data.

The conclusion is based on the aim, research questions and the findings of this study. The study was conducted in ward 12 in the Jouberton Township which falls Matlosana municipality in the North West Province. The respondents were community members from ward 12 in extension 22, Jouberton location. Semi-structured and focus group interview were guided by purposive sampling, qualitative was employed as method.

5.2 Introduction

Chapter one of this study is based on the background to the problem identified and later proposed by the researcher to explore the nature of communication during ward meeting at municipal ward meeting. Citizen participation at grassroots level is essential in ensuring participatory democracy is realised. The need for the importance of communication that is participatory has been deemed to be important in changing the lives of ordinary South Africans. The first chapter also identified the need to explore the gaps left by other researches regarding the way which communication takes place during municipal ward meeting; that in investigating the nature of participation in ward meeting(a case study of ward 12 in the Jouberton Township of Matlosana municipality.

Chapter two dealt with answering the first research question see (section 2.1), it dealt with discussing the theories upon which the study is grounded on and reviewed the literature in the terrain of development communication. This was done with the aim of closing the gaps of participatory communication at local government in order contribute in the unexplored gaps left by studies that dealt with participation/participatory communication in the context of development communication. Borrowing from the literature, this chapter linked Development Communication Theory together with Paulo Freire Dialogical Praxis to examine and identify the gaps left by other studies.

The methodology chapter focused on discussing the methodology and methods applied to ensure that the study reaches its intended goals and purpose. It set the foundation for the empirical part of the research for the process of data collection and analysis given the study's research design and other strategies employed. Chapter three went further to explain the motivation behind the choosing of the qualitative methodology which was used since this study is exploratory study.

Linking the data collection and analysis with the researcher philosophical orientation which is interpretivists were there multiple construction of reality and this guided the data that was collected because the research did not want to only focus and depend on only one sided views of things with regards to the nature of participation during ward meeting in local government. The study then relied on different world views of different role players i.e. community members and ward councillors together with ward committee members from which the study was conducted. This assisted in beefing up what constituted and became of chapter four, were the interpretation of data and analysed took place. At least seven recording were done with all twenty nine participants, three semi-structured interviews and four focus-group interview were held, over period three months. Semi-structured interviews, focus-group interviews and observation were used as tools of collecting data.

Thematic approach as mentioned was used, according Clark & Bruin (2017) this process is accessible, not tied up to any epistemology meaning that its flexible qualitative data analysis. It is tedious method analysing identifying and interpreting data, were the research gives meaning to patterns that comes during the analysis. Through this approach the researcher is able to derive themes and the codes from. It has many approaches but it remains to be the most influential analysis in the field of social sciences. Maguire & Delahunt (2017) also echoed the same sentiments he argues that its interest is to assist in identifying important patterns and themes.

The exploration of this study addressed the research questions as presented in (see chapter 1 section 4.1.) through the research design. The usage of a semi -structured and focus-group interviews which were the most suitable for this research because it answered relevant research questions (2 & 3), and it also gave the researcher time to when collecting data to be able to extract content-rich knowledge on the subject matter while examining the phenomenon in the natural setting. The data collection was accomplished through semi-structured interviews and focus-group interview. The data analysis was done using thematic content analysis. Further, validity was achieved following qualitative research validity – credibility, transferability,

dependability and conformability. Chapter three and four combined their purpose was to answer question two and three.

Since the study was conducted to explore the Nature of participation in ward Meeting 12 in the Jouberton Township of Matlosana Municipality, as mentioned in previous chapters. Now the purpose of this last part, chapter five is to provide summary of the results, then consolidate the findings of the study, which will be followed by the recommendations based on the findings of the experiences stakeholders that took part in the study on the nature participation at ward 12.

5.3 Summary of research findings

The goal of the study was to assess and explore the Nature of participation in ward meetings at ward 12 in Jouberton township of Matlosana local municipality. Through the data collection and analysis the research studied experiences and also identified factors affecting communication with ward councillor, and ward committee members and the community investigating if meaningful participation takes place during the meetings.

5.3.1 Research Objectives

This study sought to:

- Explore the nature communication between councillors and the public during the municipal ward meetings;
- Examine the communication channels used by councillors and the public during municipal ward meetings; and
- Explore the platforms given to the public for participation.

The findings have revealed that challenges at municipal ward meetings were complex in their nature and this keeps affecting how things ought to happen in the context of participation. Studies trying to address this challenge have been conducted but the problem still remains. Looking at ward meeting has opened eyes that the challenges is not only one sided but on both side of all role players. For instance looking at the ward councillor' role it was evident that dealing with people needs is not as easy as in a paper. It came out that people have lost trust in this system of effectiveness making seem like some things just exist in paper but the challenges remains to be a practical and oversight by the municipality. In addition it was reported that by the participants that the ward councillor lacked the ability to consult the community on what they think they need but always decides for them what changes they need. He was seen as being

more political and using thuggish ways to control the ward, not even coming with ways to ensure the safety by inviting the police service for the benefit of community members during ward meeting, this in its nature affects participation holistically leading to hopelessness on the system.

Ward councillor to make the ward committee work, but lacks when come to making participation during ward meeting. In some cases, ward committee members were viewed and regarded to by communities as being controlled, manipulated, and captured and serving the interests of the ward councillor instead of the communities. Passing the blame is an order of the day showing a lack of regard for each party involved, leading lack of trust.

Another major finding was that there is a challenge in the facilitation process, that how meeting are arranged, and conducted. This come across as one of the issue that lead to the dysfunction of the meeting, leading to some people in the community not taking the meeting serious. Finding revealed that there was poor attendance of the ward meeting and this sentiment were shared by all participants, form the councillor it came across as if residents don't take the meeting serious, by attending while their intoxicated, while the residents complain about not being part of any decision. They accused them of failing to even choosing the right time that is convenient for them. For instance, meeting were always in short notice and mostly during the week when some residents where still at work, this deprives them a chance to be part of the meetings. Although the leaders know their role it came across as if they ignored them, there is a sense of impatient and also the community lacks the knowledge on some the important factors that constitute a ward meeting. But be that as it may participation ought to take place; ward councillors and ward committee must never forget their agents of municipal councils.

It's clear that participation is regarded and taken serious at face value, and everyone wants to participate. But the finding revealed that the relationship between community members, councillor, and ward committee members was broken, the community view their representative as traitors who have forgot about what they're in those position.

Therefore lack of trust, lack of communication, lack consultation, lack of respect and lack of patience and consideration had led and produced dysfunctional ties, and it affects the effectiveness of the ward with regards to participation. For instance, the ward councillor must serve as the chairperson and must take charge and fix what went in his ward, while ward committee members need to create a trust worthy relationship with residents and reassure them that they have their interest at heart, residents must be more patient and take time to understand how things are done and the operation of how things are done at grassroots level.

Over and above there is consistence from the previous literature on why participation fails. But something out is that things are turning to the worst despite intervention, the finding revealed a form disregard to feelings people in general. Formal education is showing to be important when comes to occupying position of power, and there is also no consequence management, municipal moving further from the people and this is affecting how they view them.

5.4 Recommendations of the Study

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made for the ward councillor, ward committee members, municipal council, and community members of ward 12 in the Jouberton Township of Matlosana Municipality.

Public participation is the most important obligation when it comes to involvement of community members especially when it comes to decision making meant to change livelihoods. According to the Municipal System Act (Act 32 of 2000), local and district municipality are charged with the responsibility of caring for people, this legislation is clear that local government is supposed to espouse participatory democracy.

5.4.1 Recommendation on Ward Committee Members;

- Ward committee members should re-establish relationship and trust with community by constantly arranging meetings and regularly update on any programs coming, challenges faced by the at the discussion table.
- Ward committee members encourage residents to attend meetings and educate them about the pro and cons of not attending the ward meeting.
- Meet with the community without the presence of the councillor being there and talk to them about their challenges
- Go beyond the scope of what is expected from them e.g. providing educational material on how things work.

5.4.2 Recommendation on ward councillor

- The ward councillor regarded to as the chairperson of the must should avail himself beyond meetings.
- Be more consultative to the community even beyond.

- Allow contribution in a form of participation from the community beyond official meeting.
- Promote participation and attendance of the community to the meeting.
- Explore other ways of calling meeting e.g. community radio station and even community newspaper, and putting notes at local shops.
- Move away from calling meeting during the week and chose a convenient day over the weekend which is known and accepted as a day for ward meeting.

5.4.3 Recommendation on ward councillor

- The councillor needs to encourage participation and be more consultative, the principle of participation is to allow active participation, and this literally means being able to be part of the decision process especially decision taken during the ward meeting.
- Provided educational drive and not only discuss what the municipality intends to bring to the people, be more creative by coming with initiatives that suits the people.
- Also use the police service to ensure order on other meetings was he predicts there will be chaos, as this provides a level of protection for those who want to attend.
- Keep record were he has implemented what was suggested by the community as a way to show that he does take their opinion serious and to cognisance.
- Empower the community especially by involving them programs meant for them, as this will assist when they become involve in the change brought to them. Empowerment mean in the context development communication allowing people to also access and make a living for resources that are meant to bring development in their community.
- Ward councillor should consider prioritise them by letting get the projects like construction work when building the road, schools.
- Invite them to council meeting to see for themselves how arguments are won and how they lost.

5.4.4 Recommendation on community members

- Community members need more education on how ward meetings operate.

- Meet the each half way by coming with ways that show they are also invested in the services provided.
- Be a bit more understanding and patient.
- Community members need to attend the meeting and know that decision will take with or without them.

5.5 Limitation of the study

The major limitation of this study was the obstacle of the availability from the municipal officials. The researcher was face with the sustainability of the focus group, regulation of the Covid 19 pandemic which prohibited gatherings, this meant that any meeting had to curbed to a certain number in order to put the lives of participants at risk, the senior officials from the municipality i.e. (mayor or council speaker, public participation/IDP manager) never honoured interviews appointment. These challenges emanated from the communication from the mayor's office, but also the death of the same mayor, but the office kept on procrastinating, the council speaker refused to avail themselves, while other officials kept on referring the researcher to the highest office in the municipality. This despite the approval letters been singed and send back to the moderator.

This led to the study only relying on the data by community members, councillor and ward committee, it brought with it restriction on the accusation brought by parties involved, thus the findings are only reflective of what happens on the ground and lacks the voice of the administrators.

It can be concluded that, there is huge consistence literature when it comes to community participation in the context communication at grassroots level. The research has found that there was a huge gap that needs to bridge between community members and Matlosana Local Municipality, therefore meaning that there is lack of participation in its true form were ordinary people are allowed practically to actively participate in local government in south Africa, particularly within the context of ward meeting system. So far the literature focuses on the aspects outside ward meetings even though there are those i.e. Naidoo (2010), Mtshali (2016), Mkhwanaze (2013), Madumo (2011), Molale (2014) &(2019), Mojapelo (2007), and Joshua (2014) just to mention a few. But this study is limited and focuses on ward meeting systems. With that been said maybe there can be a study that can be conducted calling for models or frameworks that can look into assisting with the challenges of participation at ward meeting.

REFERENCES:

Ababio, E.P. 2004. Enhancing Community Participation in Developmental Local Government for Improved Service Delivery. *Journal of Public Administration*, 39(2), 272-289.

Adebayo A. D. & Butcher. J. (2022). Community Empowerment in Nigeria's Tourism Industry: An Analysis of Stakeholders' Perceptions. *Tourism Planning and Development*. 1-17..

Akaranga, S.I., & Makau, B. K. (2016) The Hermeneutics of Education Management Information System for Kitinga Primary School in Mwingi Central-Kenya. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 7(35), 36-40.

Akaranga, S.I., & Makau, B. K. (2016). Ethical considerations and their application to research: a case of the University of Nairobi. *Journal of educational policy and entrepreneurial research*, 3 (12): 1-9.

Aklilu, A. Belete, A., & Moyo, T. (2014). Analysing Community Participation in the Municipal Integrated Development Processes in Limpopo, South Africa. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(25), 257-262.

Ako, N. J. 2017. *Participatory Development: A Study of Community and Citizen Participation in Development and Policymaking in Stockholm, Värmdo and Bortkyrka municipalities in Sweden*. Malmö University (Thesis-MA).

Alexander, P., Runciman, C., Ngwane, T., Moloto B., Mokgele K., & van Staden, N. 2018. Frequency and turmoil: South Africa's community protest 2005-2017, *South African Crime Quarterly*, 63, 27- 42.

Ali, A. C., & Sonderling S. (2017). Factors Affecting Participatory Communication for Development: The Case of a Local Development Organization in Ethiopia. *Malaysian journal of communication*, 33 (1), 80-97.

Ali, A.C. 2017. *Participatory development communication in Ethiopia: a local development organization in focus*. Pretoria: UNISA. (Thesis – PhD).

Ang, P.H., & Dalmia, S. (2000). Operational, not theoretical: A critique of the current paradigm in development communication, *Asian Journal of Communication*, 10(1), 18-32.

Arnstein, S.R. 1969. A ladder of citizen participation, *Journal of the American institute of planners*,35(4), 216-224..

Auriacombe, C. J. (2020). The use of participatory action research in a participative democracy: in critique of mechanisms for citizen participation. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity Studies*, 12(1), 1309-2063.

Bakre. O., & Dorasamy. N. 2018. Charting the mode for community participation in service delivery – research. *Commonwealth Youth and Development*, 16(1):1-28.

Barichievy, K., Piper, L., & Parker, B. (2005). Assessing 'participatory governance' in local government: A case-study of two South African cities. *Politeia*, 24(3), 370393

Barranquero, A. (2017). Rediscovering the Latin American Roots of Participatory Communication for Social Change. *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*, 8(1), 154-177.

Bauer, C. (2009). Public Participation and the lack of service deliver before and after the 2006 local government elections in the Free State. *Politeia*, 28(1), 28-45.

Boafo, S.T.K. (2006). Participatory development communication; An African perspective (in *People, Land & Water: Participatory development communication for natural resources management* (1st ed.). London. IDRC.

Booyesen, S. 2009. Public participation in democratic South Africa: from popular mobilisation to structured co-optation and protest. *Politeia*, 28(1), 1-27.

Breakfast, N. Mekoa I. & Maphazi N. (2015). Participatory Democracy in Theory and Practice: A Case Study of Local Government in South Africa. *Africa's Public Service Delivery & Performance Review*, 3(3), 31-51.

Bryson, J.M., Quick, K.S., Slotterback, C.S., & Crosby, B.C. (2013). Designing public participation processes. *Public administration review*, 73(1), 23-34.

Carpentier. N., & Fabio Ribeiro, A.D. (2019). Rescuing participation: a critique on the dark participation concept. *Comunicação e Sociedade*, 36(1):17-35.

Cash, C., & Swatuk, L. 2010. Integrated Development Planning in South Africa: Lessons from the Dwars River Valley. *Urban Forum*, 22, 53-73. DOI: 10.1007/s12132-010-9107-4

- Chaka, M.P. 2011. *Public Relations in Nation-Building: A Participatory Development Communication Perspective for South Africa*. Mahikeng: NWU (Thesis-PhD).
- Chikozho. L. K. 2013. *A critique of development participatory communication discourse, its translation into internet-based international development policy for poverty reduction, and implications for African national ICT for development policy*. University of the Witwatersrand (Thesis-MA).
- Chitnis, K.S. 2005. *Communication for Empowerment and Participatory Development: A Social Model of Health in Jamkhed, India* . Ohio University (Thesis-PhD).
- Choudhury, P.S. 2011. Media in development communication. *Global Media Journal*,2(2), 2249-5835.
- Cornwall, A. (2007). Buzzwords and fuzzwords: deconstructing development discourse. *Development in Practice*, 17(4), 471-482.
- Cornwall, A. (2008). Unpacking 'Participation': models, meanings and practices. *Oxford University Press Community Development Journal*, 43(3), 269-283.
- Dahl. R., Shapiro, I., & Cheibub. J. A. (2003). *The democracy source book*. London. The MIT Press
- De Vries, S.J. (2018). *12 Word Biblical Commentary* (2nd Ed.). Michigan. Zondervan.
- Dhanani, S., Damron-Rodriquez, J., Leung, M., Villa, V., Washington, D.L., Makinodan, T., & Harada, N. (2002). Community-Based Strategies for Focus Group Recruitment Minority Veterans. *Military Medicine*, 167(6): 501-505.
- Draai, E., & Taylor, D. (2009). Public Participation Effective Service Delivery, A Local Government Perspective: *Journal of Public Administration*, 44 (1), 112 – 122.
- Ellis, F., & Biggs, S. 2001. Evolving Themes in Rural Development 1950s-200s. *Development Policy Review*, 19 (4), 437-448.
- Enaifoghe A.O, & Adetiba T. C. (2019). The Dynamic Approaches in Enhancing Citizenry Participation in South African Local Government. *Journal of social and development*,10 (2),33-43

Escobar, A. (1995). *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (1st ed.). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Everatt, D., Marias, H., & Dube, N. (2010). Participation...for what Purpose? Analysing the Depth and Quality of Public Participation in the Integrated Development Planning Process in Gauteng, *Politikon*, 37(2), 223-249.

Eversole, R. (2003). Managing the Pitfalls of Participatory Development: Some Insights from Australia. *World Development*, 31(5), 781-795.

Fejes, F. (1980). The growth of Multinational Advertising Agencies in Latin America. *Journal of Communication*, 30(4), 36-49.

Freire .P. (2005). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (30th ed.). London. The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc.

Freire, P. (2021). *Pedagogy of the Heart: with a new by Antonia Darder, Paulo Freire*. London, United Kingdom. Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

Freire, P. 1993. *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (30th ed.). New York. The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc.

Giddens, A., & Pierson, C. (1998). *Conversation with Anthony Giddens making sense of Modernity* (1st Ed.). California. Stanford University Press.

Gorman, G.E., & Clayton, P.C. (2005). *Qualitative Research for the information professional: A practical Handbook*. 2nd ed. London: Facet Publishing.

Guest, G., MacQueen, K., & Namey, E. (2012). *Applied Thematic Analysis*. California. Sage Publication, inc.

Henning, E. (2004). *Finding your way in qualitative research*. Pretoria, Van Schaik.

Holland, J., & Campbell, J. (2005). *Methods in Development Research, Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Swansea, Practical Action Publishing.

Ibrahim, M. A. (2012). Thematic Analysis: A critical Review of its Process and evaluation. *West East Journal of Social Sciences*, 1(1), 39-45.

Igwe I. O.C. (2018). History of the International Economy: The Bretton Woods System and its Impact on the Economic Development of Developing Countries. *Athens Journal of law*, 4(2), 105-126.

Imms, C., Granlund, M., Wilson, P.H., Rosenbaum, P., & Gordon, A. (2016). Participation, both a means and an end: a conceptual analysis of process and outcomes in childhood disability. *Development Medicine & Child Neurology*, 59 (4), 346-347.

Jacobson, T., & Servaes, J. (1999). Theoretical approaches to participatory communication. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

Jenlink, P.M., & Banathy, B.H. (2005). Dialogue: Conversation as Culture Creating and Consciousness Evolving(1st Ed.). New York. Plenum Publishers.

Jooste, J. 2014. *The nature of participatory communication between stakeholders of the bhive university incubator*. Potchefstroom: NWU (Thesis-MA).

Joshua, N. A. 2017. *Participatory Development: A study of community and citizen participation in development and policymaking in Stockholm, Värmdo and Bortkyrka municipalities in Sweden*. Malmö University. (Thesis-MA)

Koma,S.B. (2014). The Implimentation of Local Economic Development Policy, The case of the Emakhazeni Local Municipalpality in South Africa: *Administratio Publica*, 22(4), 40-61.

Kothari, C.R. (2004). Research Methodology: methods and techniques (2nd Ed.). New Delhi, New Age International (P) Ltd.

Kumar, R. (2011). Research methodology: a step-by-step guide for beginners(3rd Ed.). London. SAGE.

Leboea. A. T. 2003. *Community participation through the ward system : a case study in ward 28, Maluti- a- Phofung municipality*. NWU. (Mini-dissertation).

Leketanyane, P., Molale, T., Ogunsanya, A., & Asak, M. 2021. Deconstructing the Participation of Rural Dwellers in a Community Radio Station: A Participatory Development Communication Approach to a Radio Station in the North West Province, South Africa. (in Chiumbu, S., & Motsaathebe, G. eds. Radio, Public Life, and Citizen Deliberation in South Africa, Routledge, 50-66).

- Lennie, J., & Tacchi, J. (2011). *Research, Researching Monitoring and Evaluation in Communication for Development*. United Nations Inter-agency Resource Pack New York. UNICEF.
- Lerner, D. 1958. *The passing of traditional society*(1st Ed.). Free Press.
- Lie, R., & Servaes, J. (2015). Disciplines in the field of communication for development. *Communication Theory*, 25(2), 244-258.
- Loboea, T. 2003. *Community Participation through the Ward System: A Case Study In Ward 28, Maluti- A- Phofung Municipality*. Potchefstroom: NWU. (Thesis - MA).
- Madumo, O. S. 2011. *The Role of Ward Committee in Facilitating Public Participation with Particular Reference to Mamelodi, South Africa*. Johannesburg: UJ (Thesis-MA).
- Madumo, O.S. 2011. *The role of ward committees in facilitating public participation with particular reference to Mamelodi, South Africa*. University of Pretoria. (Thesis-MA).
- Manyozo, L. (2006). Manifesto for Development Communication: Nora Quebral and the Banos School of development communication. *Asian Journal of Communication*, 16(1),79-99,
- Maredi, L.B. 2016. *An Investigation into the use of Participatory Communication within the Expanded Public Works Programme: A case Study of the Lepelle-Nkumpi Municipality*. University of Pretoria . (Thesis-MA).
- Maree, K. (2007). *First Steps in Research*. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.
- Masuku M.M, & Jili N.N.(2019). Public service delivery in South Africa: The political influence at local government level. *Journal of Public Affairs*,19(4),1-7.
- Masuku, M, M. & Molohe, M, P. (2019). Community Participation in Mahikeng Local Municipality: Power Relations Perspective. *Journal of Asian and Africa Studies*, 55(3) 1-11DOI:
- Mathekga, R. & Buccus, I. (2006). The challenge of local Government structures in South Africa: securing community participation. *Critical Dialogue-Public participation in Review*, 2(1),11-17.
- Matunhu, J. (2011). A critique of modernisation and dependency theories in Africa: Critical assessment. *African Journal of History and Culture*, 3(5), 65-72.
- Mautjana , M. H., & Makombe. G. (2014). Community participation or malicious compliance? : *Africa Insight*. 44 (2): 51-67.

- May, A. & De Visser, J. (2011). Community Participation & Ward Committees: *Local Government Bulletin*, 3 (1): 16.
- Mbhele, Z. 2017. *Assessing the ward committee system: The Case of Greater Koksstad Municipality*. Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University (Thesis-MA)
- McKinnon, S. (2012). Text -Based Approaches to Qualitative Research: An Overview of Methods, Process, and Ethics. Valdivia. *The International Encyclopaedia of Media Studies*. DOI : 10.1002/9781444361506.WBIEMS185
- Mefalopulos, P. (2008). *Development Communication Sourcebook: Broadening the Boundaries of Communication*. Washington DC: The World Bank Washington, DC.
- Mhlari N.C. 2014 . *Community and Development in South Africa: The case study of Ward Committees as an effective Vehicle for public participation*. Pretoria. UNISA (Thesis-MA).
- Mkhwanazi. J. S.2013. *Ward committee functionaries as participants for improving service delivery at Mafube local municipality*.Vaal. NWU (Mini-dissertation)
- Mojapelo, M.A. 2007.*The effectiveness of the integrated development planning (IDP) as a tool to accelerate service delivery: A case study of Aganang local municipality in Limpopo*. Potchefstroom: NWU (Mini-dissertation).
- Molale, T. & Fourie, L. (2022). A six-step framework for participatory communication and institutionalized participation in South Africa's municipal IDP process. *Development in Practice*. DOI: 10.1080/09614524.2022.2104810.
- Molale, T.B. (2019). Participatory Communication in South African municipal government: Matlosana local municipality's Integrated Development (IDP) processes. *Communicare*, 38(1), 57-75.
- Molale, T.B. 2014. The extent of participatory communication in the IDP (Integrated Development Plan) context of the Jouberton Township of the Matlosana Local Municipality. Potchefstroom: NWU (Thesis - MA).
- Morrow, R.A., & Torres, C.A. (2002). *Reading Freire and Habermas: critical pedagogy and transformative social change*. 1st Ed. New York. Teachers Collage Press.

- Mosonik, J. C. 2017. *The influence of participatory communication in promoting accountability and transparency of constituency development fund in Emurua Dikirr constituency*. Nairobi University. (Thesis-MA).
- Msibi, F., & Penzhorn, C. (2010). Participatory communication for local government in South Africa: a study of the Kungwini Local Municipality, *SAGE journal*, 26(3), 225-236.
- Mtshali, N. 2016. *Public participation through ward committees: a case study of umshwathi municipality. KwaZulu-Natal*. University of KwaZulu-Natal (Thesis-MA).
- Naidoo, L. 2010. *The participatory development communication approach of Thusong service centres in Tshwane*. Potchefstroom: NWU (Thesis - MA).
- Naidoo, L. & Fourie L. (2013). Participatory anchored development in South Africa as evaluated at thusong service centres. *Communitas*.18, 95-115
- Napier, C.J., (2008). Public participation and ward committees: The case of the Tshwane municipality. *Journal for Contemporary History*, 33(1):167-170.
- Nhema, A. (2016). Modernization, Dependency and Structural Adjustment Development Theories and Africa: A Critical Appraisal. *International Journal of social Science Research*, 4(1), 2327-5510.
- Nieuwenhuis, J. (2007). Qualitative research designs and data gathering techniques (In Maree, K., ed. *First steps in research*. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers. 91-92.
- Ntlemeza, A. M. 2007. *An investigation of the challenges facing the ward committee system with specific reference to selected municipalities in the Province of the Eastern Cape*. Eastern Cape: Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (Thesis-MA).
- Otto, H., & Fourie, L. (2016). Theorising participation as communicative action for development and social change. *Communicare*, 35(1), 21-39.
- Quarry, W. & Ramirez, R. (2009). *Communication for Another Development: Listening before Telling* (1st Ed.). New York. Zed Books Ltd.
- Rasila, B.N. & Mudau, J. (2013). Citizen Participation in local government: The importance of effective communication in rural development. *International Journal of Community Development*, 1 (1): 12–18.

Rogers, E.M. (1969). *Modernisation among peasants: The impact of communication* (1st Ed.) New York. Rineehart & Winston.

Rogers, E.M. (1976). Communication and Development: The passing of the Dominant Paradigm. *Communication Research*, 3(2), 213-240.

Scott, L. (2005). Participatory multi-criteria decision analysis; Anew tool for integrated development planning. *Development Southern Africa*, 22(5), 696-715.

Servaes, J. (2008). *Communication for Development and Social Change* (1st Ed.) New Delhi. Sage.

Shah, S.R., & Al-Bargi, A. (2013). Research Paradigm: Researchers' Worldviews, Theoretical Framework and Study Design. *Arab World English Journal*, 4(4), 252-264.

Shih Y.(2018). Some Critical Thinking on Paulo Freire's Critical Pedagogy and Its Educational Implications. *International Education Studies*, 11(9), 64-68.

Smith, J.R. 2003. *A Participatory Health Communication Strategy for Sustainable Development: HIV/AIDS in Potchefstroom*. Potchefstroom: NWU (Thesis-MA).

South Africa, 1996. Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996.

South Africa. 2000. Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000.

South Africa. 2017. Annual budget of city of Matlosana Municipal: Medium term revenue and expenditure framework. Provincial Gazette.1 July.

Sylvester E. Z. (2016). Major Development Communication Paradigms and Practices: Implications for Graphic Communication: African Research Review, *An International multi-disciplinary journal*, 10(3): 317-337.

Sylvester. E. Z. (2016). African research Review. An international Multi-disciplinary. *Journal Ethiopia*, 10(3), 42.

Thabanchu, O.R. 2011. *Enhancing participatory democracy through the ward committee system in Matlosana local municipality*. Potchefstroom: NWU (Mini-dissertation).

Tracy, S.J. (2013) *Qualitative Research Methods: Collecting data evidence crafting analysis communication*. Chichester: Wiley Blackwell.

Tufte, T, Mefalopulos, P. (2009). *Participatory Communication: A Practical Guide.*, Washington DC. The World Bank.

Tuli,F. (2010). The basis of distinction Between Qualitative and Quantitative Research in Social Science: Reflection on Ontology, Epistemology and Methodological Perspective. *Ethiopian Journal of Education and Science*, 6(1), 97-106.

UNESCO. (2008). *Media, Communication, and Information: Celebrating 50 Years of Theories and Practice*. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001447/144725e.pdf>. 27 May. 2020.

Van Zyl. J. 2008. *The Bretton woods school of development communication as an 'agent' of modernisation in sub-Saharan Africa*. UCT (Thesis-MA).

White, R. A. (2004). Is empowerment the answer? Current theory and research on development communication. *Gazette: The International Journal for Communication Studies*, 66(1), 7-24.

Williams, J.J.(2006). Community Participation, Lessons from post-apartheid South Africa. *Policy studies*, 27(3): 197-216.

Zimbudzana, J. 2011. A critique of modernization and dependency theories in Africa: Critical assessment. *African Journal of History and Culture*, 3(5),65-72.

Zinttel, T. & Fuchs, D. (2007). Participation democracy and political participation. 1st ed. New York. Routledge.

ANNEXURE A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE/APPROVAL LETTER FROM NWU



Private Bag X1290, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Fax: 018 299-4910
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Research Ethics Regulatory Committee
Tel: 018 299-4849
Email: nkosinathi.machine@nwu.ac.za

19 August 2020

ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY

Based on approval by the **Arts Research Ethics Committee (AREC)** on 19/08/2020, the Arts Research Ethics Committee hereby **approves** your study as indicated below. This implies that the North-West University Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (NWU-RERC) 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: The nature of participatory communication in Ward Meetings of Ward 12 in the Jouberton Township of Matlosana Municipality | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Study Leader/Supervisor (Principal Investigator)/Researcher: Mr TB Molale | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Student: N.L. Kgatlhane | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Ethics number: | <table border="1"> <tr> <td>N</td> <td>W</td> <td>U</td> <td>-</td> <td>0</td> <td>1</td> <td>0</td> <td>4</td> <td>2</td> <td>-</td> <td>2</td> <td>0</td> <td>-</td> <td>A</td> <td>7</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3">Institution</td> <td></td> <td colspan="4">Study Number</td> <td></td> <td colspan="2">Year</td> <td colspan="4">Status</td> </tr> </table> | | | N | W | U | - | 0 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 2 | - | 2 | 0 | - | A | 7 | Institution | | | | Study Number | | | | | Year | | Status | | | |
| N | W | U | - | 0 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 2 | - | 2 | 0 | - | A | 7 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Institution | | | | Study Number | | | | | Year | | Status | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Application Type: Single Study | Risk Category: <table border="1"><tr><td>Low</td></tr></table> | | | Low | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Low | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Commencement date: 19/08/2020 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Expiry date: 19/08/2025 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 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):

- Translation of the informed consent document to the languages applicable to the study participants should be submitted to the AREC (if applicable).
- Any research at governmental or private institutions, permission must still be obtained from relevant authorities and provided to the AREC. Ethics approval is required BEFORE approval can be obtained from these authorities.

| |
|--|
| <p>General conditions:</p> <p><i>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:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The study leader/supervisor (principle investigator)/researcher must report in the prescribed format to the AREC:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>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</i> - <i>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.</i> • <i>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 AREC, 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.</i> • <i>Annually a number of studies may be randomly selected for an external audit.</i> • <i>The date of approval indicates the first date that the study may be started.</i> • <i>In the interest of ethical responsibility, the NWU-RERC and AREC reserves the right to:</i> |
|--|

- 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 AREC 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.
- AREC can be contacted for further information or any report templates via 13128388@nwu.ac.za or 018 285 2301.

The AREC 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 AREC or the NWU-RERC for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely



Prof L.M. Fourie
Acting Chairperson NWU Arts Research Ethics Committee

Original details: (22351930) C:\Users\22351930\Desktop\ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY.docm
8 November 2018

File reference: 9.1.5.4.2

ANNEXURE B: LETTER OF APPROVAL FROM MATLOSANA MUNICIPALITY



16 April 2021

Private Bag X2046
Mahikeng
2545

Dear Sir

Attention: **MrNL Kgathane**

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH- NWU

Your request as per mail on 09 March 2021 with regard to the above mentioned matter bears reference.

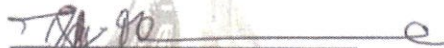
Permission is hereby granted to interview officials within the jurisdiction of City of Matlosana Local Municipality with the sole purpose of collection of data for your academic research.

You are reminded to adhere to confidentiality and anonymity at all times.

The municipality wishes you all the best and success in your studies and hope you will share your knowledge for the betterment of our community.

Trust you will find the above to be in order.

Yours faithfully,



TSR NKHUMISE
MUNICIPAL MANAGER

MUNICIPAL MANAGER

Tel: +27 18 487 8009/8537 Fax: +27 18 462 1652, PO Box 99 Klerksdorp 2570
E-Mail: dnkos@klerksdorp.org / Website: www.klerksdorp.org

CITY OF
MATLOSANA

TSR Nkhumise/bm (84)

ANNEXURE C: SEMI-STRUCTURE INTERVIEW GUIDE



Private Bag X1290, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: +2718 299-1111/2222

Fax: +2718 299-4910

Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

INFORMATION SHEET FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW DISCUSSIONS

Title of study: The Nature of Participatory communication in Ward Meetings of Ward 12 in the Jouberton Township of Matlosana Municipality

Researcher: Kgatlhane, Ntlantla Lucky.

Student Number: 21443718

Contact Number: 082 342 1711

Study Leader: Dr Molale, Tshepang Bright.

E-mail: 21479223@g.nwu.ac.za

Dear Participant,

You kindly invited participate in this MA study investigating communication related matters that affects you. This research is based on Ward 12 in the Jouberton Township of Matlosana Local Municipality in the Northwest Province. This municipality falls under the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District. The study intends to explore the nature of participatory communication between ward councillors and the public during their ward meeting. Amongst others, it will explore how your councillor, ward committee members in Matlosana Local Municipality facilitate communication platforms/channels in ensuring that communication takes places in the right way during the ward meeting; interrogating the perceptions of role-players (i.e., community members) with regard to the nature of participatory communication. Furthermore, the study will examine the nature and practice of modern-day public participation in local government, the intention being to understand nature of communication in all stages of ward meetings involving all stakeholders.

If you do decide to participate in the study, the actual interview will take place at a location of your choice which must be within Jouberton in Matlosana local municipality. The study shall be conducted by the researcher who has undertaken research interviews in the past, with the aid and advice of the study leader or supervisor.

You are invited to participate in this study because of your involvement during the communication process between you as the member of the community and the ward councillor at the meeting of ward 12 in Jouberton at Matlosana local municipality. The importance and contribution of the study will assist in understanding challenges in the terrain of communication; this will ensure the effectiveness in eliciting meaningful and active community participation and engagement during ward meetings. The study also aims to contribute constructively to both theory and practice. Your participation in this study shall pose no risk or danger to you, either physically or in any other form. In addition, neither you will find the questions sensitive or controversial.

Procedure of interview and type of questions

Our interaction shall be informed of a short interview that is not expected to last more than 30 minutes and this due to Covid-19 as the researcher does not want to keep you long from the comfort of your home. During the interview, you shall only be required to provide answers and nothing more. Please expect follow-up questions since the purpose of the interview is to gain as much insights as possible from you.

NB: Please note that the researcher shall provide Covid-19 masks, sanitizer and safe distance will observe to ensure safety during the interviews (all covid 19 protocols will be observed).

What is your understanding about ward meeting?

Take me through what you discuss at ward meeting?

How would you explain the participation process during the ward meeting?

How does getting involved during a communication/ participation benefit and assist people involved?

How is participation facilitated during ward meeting?

What are communication techniques and methods employed during the ward meeting?

What is the importance and role of participatory communication during ward meeting?

How do you view the nature of communication during ward meeting?

How can the communication process be improved?

In your view, how do you arrive at decision process?

How does communication process take place between you, councillors and ward committee members during the meeting?

What can be done to improve participation during ward meetings./How can participatory communication be improved?

Does culture feature in where during ward meeting?

Why is culture important in the context of this meeting?

Thank you so much and for your willingness to take part in this study. Are there any other related issues that you would like to address before we depart?

Thank you!

Your rights

Your participation in this study must be entirely voluntary and at your choice. You are free to decline participation from the very beginning or withdraw at any point during the interview without fear of any consequences. I shall need to record our interview, you are free to raise your discomfort at any stage of the interview process.

For further information, clarification or concern regarding the study and your participation kindly call:

Role: Supervisor

Name: Dr Tshepang Bright Molale

Contact Number: 078 531 1364

Confidentiality and anonymity

All information you give shall be kept confidential and used only for the academic purpose stated. On the part of the researcher, recording of the interview shall be password protected on a computer and deleted immediately it is transcribed. Also, the researcher and his assistant shall not reveal your identity to any other person. Your identity shall also remain anonymous as labels shall be substituted for yourself (e.g. Respondent A, B, or C, etc.) in the research report. This study is entirely academic, and the researcher has not entered any agreement with a third party to use findings for other interests. You are free to indicate any other conditions you want me to abide with during and after the interview.

Declaration by respondent

I have read the information provided and understand the purpose of the investigation including my role and rights. I give my full consent to:

a) Voluntary participant.

Signature of participant and date

.....

Signature of researcher and date

.....

ANNEXURE D: FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE



Private Bag X1290, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: +2718 299-1111/2222

Fax: +2718 299-4910

Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

INFORMATION SHEET FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Title of study: The Nature of Participatory communication in Ward Meetings of Ward 12 in the Jouberton Township of Matlosana Municipality

Researcher: Kgatlhane, Ntlantla Lucky.

Student Number: 21443718

Contact Number: 082 342 1711

Study Leader: Dr Molale, Tshepang Bright.

E-mail: 21479223@g.nwu.ac.za

Dear Participant,

You kindly invited participate in this MA research investigation of communication related matters that affects you. This research is based on Ward 12 in the Jouberton Township of Matlosana Local Municipality in the Northwest Province. This municipality falls under the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District. The study intends to explore the nature of participatory communication between ward councillors and the public during their ward meeting. Amongst others to explore how your councillor, ward committee members in Matlosana Local Municipality facilitate communication platforms/channels in ensuring that communication takes places in the right way during the ward meeting, to explore the perceptions of role-players (i.e., community members) regarding the nature of participatory communication. This research will explore nature and practice of modern-day public participation in local government, the intention is to understand nature of communication in all stages of ward meetings involving all stakeholders.

If you do decide to participate in the study, the actual interview will take place at a location of your choice which must be within Jouberton in Matlosana local municipality. The study shall be

conducted by the researcher who has undertaken research interviews in the past, with the aid and advice of the study leader or supervisor.

You are invited to participate in this study because of your involvement during the communication process between you as the member of the community and the ward councillor at the meeting of ward 12 in Jouberton at Matlosana local municipality. The importance and contribution of the study will assist in understanding challenges in the terrain of communication; this will ensure the effectiveness in eliciting meaningful and active community participation and engagement during ward meetings. The study also aims to contribute constructively to both theory and practice. Your participation in this study shall pose no risk or danger to you, either physically or in any other form. In addition, neither you will find the questions sensitive or controversial.

Procedure of interview and type of questions

Our interaction shall be informed of a short interview that is not expected to last more than 30 minutes and this due to Covid-19 as the researcher does not want to keep you long from the comfort of your home. During the interview, you shall only be required to provide answers and nothing more. Please expect follow-up questions since the purpose of the interview is to gain as much insights as possible from you.

NB: Please note that the researcher shall provide Covid-19 masks, sanitizer and safe distance will observed to ensure safety during the interviews (all Covid 19 protocols will be observed).

1. What do you understand about ward meeting?
2. Take me through what you discuss at ward meeting?
3. How would you explain the participation process during the ward meeting?
4. How does getting involved in this meeting benefit you?
5. How is participation facilitated during ward meeting?
6. What are communication techniques and methods employed during the ward meeting?
7. How do you view the communication during ward meeting?
8. How can the communication process be improved?
9. How does communication process take place between you, councillors and ward committee members during the meeting?

10. Does this meeting achieve their intended purpose, if yes state examples and if not, what are challenges?

Follow up, what can be done to improve participation during ward meetings/ How can participatory communication be improved?

Thank you so much and for your willingness to take part in this study. Are there any other related issues that you would like to address before we depart?

Thank you!

Your rights

Your participation in this study must be entirely voluntary and at your choice. You are free to decline participation from the very beginning or withdraw at any point during the interview without fear of any consequences. I shall need to record our interview, you are free to raise your discomfort at any stage of the interview process.

For further information, clarification or concern regarding the study and your participation kindly call:

Role: Supervisor

Name: Dr Tshepang Bright Molale

Contact Number: 078 531 1364

Confidentiality and anonymity

All information you give shall be kept confidential and used only for the academic purpose stated. On the part of the researcher, recording of the interview shall be password protected on a computer and deleted immediately it is transcribed. Also, the researcher and his assistant shall not reveal your identity to any other person. Your identity shall also remain anonymous as labels shall be substituted for yourself (e.g. Respondent A, B, or C, etc.) in the research report. This study is entirely academic, and the researcher has not entered any agreement with a third party to use findings for other interests. You are free to indicate any other conditions you want me to abide with during and after the interview.

Declaration by respondent

I have read the information provided and understand the purpose of the investigation including my role and rights. I give my full consent to:

a) Voluntary participant.

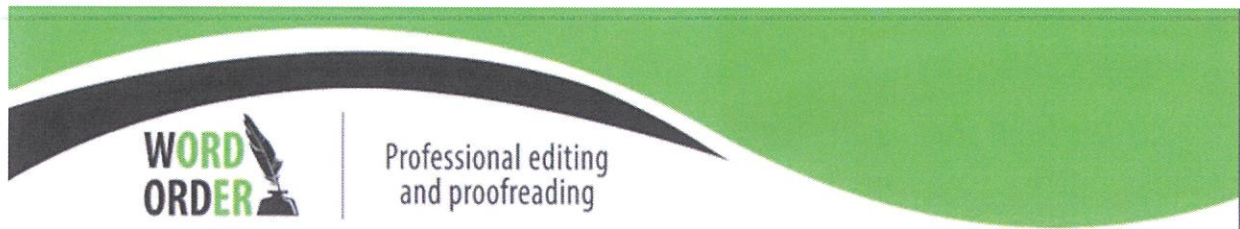
Signature of participant and date

.....

Signature of researcher and date

.....

ANNEXURE E: CERTIFICATE OF LANGUAGE EDITING



DECLARATION BY LANGUAGE EDITOR

To whom it may concern,


This declaration certifies that the dissertation below has been edited within reasonable, ethical, and professional limits, for syntax, grammar, spelling, and punctuation of the English language by one or more qualified language practitioner(s) at Word Order. The editor's revisions and comments serve as recommendations; the overall quality of the final product's contents remains the responsibility of the client/author. The language editor does not accept responsibility for any changes made to the dissertation after issuing this declaration.

MA title: *The Nature of Participatory Communication in Ward Meetings of Ward 12 in Jouberton Township of Matlosana Municipality*

Author: Ntlantla Lucky Kgatlhane

Date Issued: November 2022

Issued by: Wynand Steyn
(SATI number 1000331)
on behalf of Word Order



JW Steyn