**EXPLORING MUNICIPAL-CITIZEN COMMUNICATION CHANNELS OF THE THULAMELA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY OF THE LIMPOPO PROVINCE, AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS ON SERVICE DELIVERY**

**MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION & MANAGEMENT**

**MUTOTI NTHAMBELENI WILSON**

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# EXPLORING MUNICIPAL-CITIZEN COMMUNICATION CHANNELS OF THE THULAMELA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY OF THE LIMPOPO PROVINCE, AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS ON SERVICE DELIVERY

**By**

**MUTOTI NTHAMBELENI WILSON**

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# **D E C L A R A T I O N**

I declare that "EXPLORING MUNICIPAL-CITIZEN COMMUNICATION CHANNELS OF THE THULAMELA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY OF THE LIMPOPO PROVINCE, AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS ON SERVICE DELIVERY is my own work, and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. I also declare that this work has not been submitted before for any other degree at any other institution.

…………………………………….. …………………..

**Full name** **Date**

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**Dedication**

To my wife Gladys, daughters Thilivhali, Tshifhiwa and Mpho, and sons Tshedza and Vhutshilo.

# ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate municipal-citizen communication channels of the Thulamela Local Municipality, and their implications on service delivery. The study adopted a mixed method, qualitative-quantitative sequential approach. Qualitative data was sourced from key-informants comprised of community leaders, Ward Committee members, and a Community Development Workers. Quantitative data was sourced from ordinary community members of Dumasi village. Semi-structured interviews and questionnaires were used as data collection tools for both the qualitative and quantitative phases. Thematic Content Analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data. Data analysis for the quantitative data was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha, t-test and ANOVA test. The findings from both studies revealed that respondents perceived Thulamela Municipality's communication channels to be ineffective. Community members' reluctance to attend community meetings and lack of proper feedback were identified as the main causes. The findings further revealed that ineffectiveness of the communication channels leads to an increase in the number of community service delivery protests. Several suggestions are made resulting from the findings of this study. These include the designing and implementation of context-specific, municipal-citizen communication channels, in consultation with local communities.

**KEY CONCEPTS:** Community members, service delivery, local government, communication, rural communities

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**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

| ABBREVIATION | | FULL NAME |
|---|---|---|
| ANC | : | African National Congress |
| CDW | : | Community Development Workers |
| IDP | : | Integrated Development Plan |
| IEC | : | Independent Electoral Commission |
| REC | : | Research Ethics Committee |
| SALGA | : | South African Local Government Association |
| SANCO | : | South African National Civic Organization |
| SAPS | : | South African Police Services |
| SASSA | : | South African Social Security Agency |
| SNSs | : | Social Networking Sites |
| SPSS | : | Statistical Package for Social Sciences |
| TSC | : | Thusong Service Centres |
| USAID | : | United States of Agency for International Development |

# CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1    Introduction and background

Communication between governments and citizens is important for any country's economic, political and social wellbeing (Wang & Lim, 2011:79). As a result, most countries across the world have now put measures in place to enhance their relationship with their citizens. For instance, in China, the government has made available both official and unofficial channels through which its citizens publish their suggestions, complains and comments (Wang & Lim, 2011:82). These findings concur with those of Williams (2015: undated), who observed that just like Russia, China has adopted a one-directional communication approach in which their citizens are told what is happening with their government. In Brazil, Wampler (2011:341) found that the government was empowering its citizens with knowledge of its activities. This was done as a way of creating an atmosphere in which citizens would be encouraged to actively participate in political decision.  It is therefore safe to conclude that healthy and efficient communication between the government and its citizens plays a crucial role in establishing a cordial relationship between the two groups.

Regarding the local perspective, the government in South Africa is mandated to deliver services and infrastructures, as well as to engage the public in its various governance processes. Vivier, Seabe, Wentzel and Sanchez (2015:81) note that for this mandate to be carried out, "government needs to effectively communicate to residents on key matters, from broader planning and policy decisions to where and how they can resolve basic service issues". These authors further acknowledge that mechanisms that enable the exchange of information play a critical role in strengthening deeper community engagement. While the sharing of information is not in itself a sufficient method of engagement, such mechanisms are often seen as the 'foundation' thereof (Svara &

Denhardt, 2010:11). It is therefore important that local government employees understand the importance of putting in place effective communication strategies to be used in communicating with local communities.

However, despite the critical role that communication plays in service delivery, research findings reveal that many municipalities are characterized by lack of proper communication channels (*State of Local Government in South Africa report*, 2009). As with many of the country's municipalities, the Thulamela Municipality is also plagued by challenges on how they engage with its electorate. Its municipality-citizen engagements have been found to be ineffective in keeping its electorate informed about the progress of its service delivery programme (Dau, 2010:28). Rasila and Mudau (2012:136) attribute this problem mainly to the platforms that the government uses to transmit information down to grassroots levels. They argue that these platforms operate in a linear form where the government as the creator, producer and sender of the information is seen to be imposing the message to the people instead of reaching the consensus. This often creates communication gaps that negatively affect development initiatives in communities (Lu, 2009:4). While this is an important issue with potential for serious implications on service delivery if left unattended, there appears to be a dearth of sufficient information exchange between the municipality and the local communities. Furthermore, villagers often complain about the lack of engagement with regards to the government policies, budgets and operations, mechanisms for engagement, an issue also observed by (Malabela & Ally, 2011 in Vivier *et al*, 2015:81). The study therefore focused on exploring the effectiveness of communication channels used by Thulamela local municipality and their subsequent implications on service delivery.

## 1.2    Statement of the research Problem

South African municipalities have seen an increase in the number of service delivery protests over the past few years (Dau, 2010; Shaidi, 2013:189 and Statistics South Africa, 2012, undated). The sudden increases in these protests have been attributed to a number of factors. This includes, lack of houses, lack of employment opportunities as

well as poor communication between municipalities and their constituencies (Dau, 2010:29; Statistics South Africa, 2012, undated). Regarding the Thulamela Municipality, villages such as the Dumasi village have resorted to demonstrations as a way of venting out their frustrations about the slow pace of public service delivery. Indicators reveal that dissatisfaction with the services offered by municipalities (Dau, 2010:55). Community members argued that the services being provided to them by the municipality were inadequate.

Local municipalities are often accused of failing to update communities on their progress after the initial community imbizos (community meetings) that are held as part of its Integrated Development Programme (IDP) planning. For instance, Dau (2010:55) found that in the Thulamela Municipality, public participation is initiated through ward councillors. However, the Ward committees have been found to be not fully operational, resulting in poor communication between the local government and communities (Shaidi, 2013:192). These findings concur with earlier findings contained in a 2009 report titled, 'The State of Local Government Report'. The report reveals that communications between municipalities and communities have broken down (*State of Local Government in South Africa report*, 2009). This has resulted in communities losing confidence in the municipalities' ability to deliver quality services. Despite this, there appears to be a dearth of sufficient information on the effectiveness of the communication platforms that the Thulamela Municipality currently use to communicate its programme to the electorate. The current state means the municipality does not have adequate information to determine how the community members it serve perceived how it communicated with them. The lack of information may also mean the municipality might not be able to identify the root cause of violent service delivery protests within its jurisdictions. This study was therefore set out to determine the effectiveness of the communication channels used by the municipality and their implications on service delivery.

## 1.3. Motivation/rationale for the study

The rate of violent service delivery protests rises daily with very negative consequences to the country's economy. Billions of rands are spent rebuilding the public property destroyed during these protests. This is money that could have been used to provide much-needed services to impoverished communities. To exacerbate the situation, government does not seem to have an immediate solution to address the situation. The situation necessitates the need for studies of this nature as their findings might provide new insights on the real cause of this phenomenon and provide strategies for long-lasting solutions.

## 1.4. Significance of the study

South Africa has witnessed a significant increase in the number of violent service delivery protests in most of its local municipalities. This study aimed to bring to fore and document the main causes of this problem as perceived by community members. This will in turn reveal the degree to which community members perceive the relationship between local governments, citizens and business sector in terms of the provision of services. Such a relationship plays a key role in ensuring that there is a mutual understanding between the community and the local government on how services should be given to the people. The findings may also help the government in the formulation of better communication platforms that it can use to communicate its service delivery programmes to its electorate timeously and effectively.

## 1.5. Aims of the study

The main aim of this study was to investigate municipal-citizen communication channels of the Thulamela Local Municipality and its implications on service delivery.

## 1.6. Research objectives

The specific research objectives underpinning this study were:

- To determine the effectiveness of the Thulamela Municipality's communication channels as perceived by community members.
- To explore what community members, perceive as the most suitable municipal-citizen communication channels for Thulamela Municipality
- To suggest ways that the Thulamela Municipality can adopt to enhance the way they communicate their service delivery strategies to local communities.

## 1.7. Research questions

From the research objectives mentioned above, the study aimed to answer the following questions:

- What is the level of effectiveness of Thulamela Municipality's communication channels as perceived by community members?
- What do community members perceive as the most suitable municipal-citizen communication channels for Thulamela Municipality?
- What are some of the ways that the Thulamela Municipality can adopt to enhance the way it communicates its service delivery strategies to local communities?

## 1.8. Definition of concepts

**Public Service delivery**

For this study, public services refer to all "those services funded by means of taxation" as defined by Adams and Tovey (2012:5)

**Municipality**

For this study, a definition by Francis, Makatu, Kabiti, Mahlawule, Kori, Dondofema and Ramoshaba (2014:6) who define municipality to refer "to an elected local government body that has corporate status and limited self-governance rights and serves a specific political unit such as a town, city or rural area" will be adopted.

**Service delivery protests**

The term *service delivery protests* are used casually to describe the local protests that have taken place across South African communities. Its use implies the existence of a relationship between the protests and service delivery (Nleya, 2011:4).

**Communication**

Communication is the activity of conveying information through the exchange of thoughts, messages, or information, as by speech, visuals, signals, writing, or behaviour (Velentzas and Broni, 2011:117).

**Public Participation**

Public participation is defined "as an inclusive process aimed at deepening democracy through formal participatory mechanisms" (Davids, 2005:29).

**1.9. Organization of the dissertation**

Chapter 1

The chapter covers general introduction to the study. It encompasses the background and the significance, objectives, the statement of the research problem, research questions and definitions of operational concepts.

Chapter 2 outlines the literature review related to the topic and scholarly views on the impact of municipal information management chain on service delivery protests, with special reference to the Dumasi village.

Chapter 3 presents a detailed research methodology. This chapter covers the nature of the study, research design, population and research site, sampling procedure, data collection and analysis. Ethical considerations to be observed during the study are also presented in this chapter.

Chapter 4 is dedicated to the description and discussion of the results.

Chapter 5 synthesizes the findings in the form of a consolidated general discussion, conclusions and recommendations for further research and development practice. The references used and crucial appendices are included at the terminal end of the dissertation.

## 1.10. Summary

This chapter presents a background to the study, giving the reader with an overview on the current state of the subject under investigation. The chapter also covered the following aspects: statement of the problem that necessitated the carrying out of the study, motivation and the significance of the study as well as the objectives that the study aimed to achieve. The chapter further covered the definitions of key concepts relating to the study.  The following chapter will deal with literature review.

**CHAPTER 2**

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

## 2.1. Introduction

There is growing evidence that engaging citizens in the decision-making process of local government through the provision of information is becoming a focal point for many local governments (Kasymova, 2014:47). Many of these countries have since realized that using a one-way communication approach to communicate with the electorate was not effective and are now moving towards the two-way approach. The concept of two-way information flow represents a paradigm shift for governments that have traditionally played the role of decision-making bodies concerned with service provision, information delivery and policy enforcement. The purpose of this chapter is therefore to review existing literature on the concept of communication channels between local governments and their constituencies. Some of the aspects covered include; government-citizen communication channels in South Africa, available government prescripts and policies governing the communication between local governments and citizens, the role of relevant stakeholders in enhancing communication between government and communities, the importance of effective communication between municipalities and communities as well major factors hindering effective communication between local governments and citizens.

## 2.2. Government-citizen communication: A general overview

The significance of the need for the government to effectively communicate its programmes with its citizenry cannot be overemphasised. Many governments around the world, including those of first world countries, have noted this fact and have since introduced initiatives to include citizens in their decision-making processes (Van Belle and Cupido, 2013:27). Despite measures being put in place to engage citizenry in

governance issues, studies reveal that some countries are still struggling with the concept of participatory governance. For instance, in Bangladesh, Chowdhury and Aktaruzzaman, (2016:121) found that elected office bearers do not recognize the significance in engaging communities they govern in decision making processes. They believe that they are the only sole actors in local government since the citizenry lacks the skills to participate in council activities. The main contributory factor for this attitude is that mayors and councillors view themselves as patrons and the citizens as clients. Accordingly, being leaders makes them lose interest in educating and engaging the communities they lead in governance and development processes (Chowdhury and Aktaruzzaman, 2016:145).

## 2.3. Public participation and service delivery in South African municipalities

Upon ascending to power in 1994, the African National Congress-led government (ANC) set out to deliver equitable services to all citizens as one of the ways of redressing the injustices of the past (Twala, 2014:159). This led to the implementation of programmes such as the Batho Pele principles which were aimed at providing a framework for people-centred public service delivery (*Batho Pele Principles,* 1997). Local government is considered 'a cornerstone of community development' (Almarshad, 2015:94), and has been identified as the link between the government and grassroots communities (Almarshad, 2015:95; Vivier *et al*., 2015:81). Its mandate is to deliver services and infrastructures, as well as to engage the public in its various governance processes (Vivier *et al*., 2015:81). Its importance stems from its increasing role in local development and services.

However, for this to be effectively executed, the local government is required to communicate to residents on key matters, from broader planning and policy decisions to where and how they can resolve basic service issues, for example, where to pay, or how to report faults (Vivier *et al*, 2015:81). This requires the implementation of initiatives to facilitate community engagements on issues that directly affect them. Such initiatives

are meant to assure community members of the government's commitment to serving them. It is for this reason that effective public services are no longer seen as an advantage enjoyed by only a privileged few in the community, but as a legitimate right of all residents, particularly those who were previously disadvantaged (Pretorius and Schurink, 2007:19; Dau, 2010:23). It is for this reason that the country has witnessed an increase in the number of service delivery protests over the past few years. As Dau (2010:55) notes, people protest if they are not satisfied with the services they are offered.

Some of these protests are the result of the government's inability to effectively communicate its programmes. It has been found that most local governments struggle to engage with their communities beyond the community gatherings or imbizos that are often held once a year. Babooa (2008: 28) defines public participation "as the sum total of all citizens and communities – deliberately taking part in a goal-oriented activity". The process affords members of the public who are interested in solving issues of governance to be directly involved in the process. Babooa (2008:28) views public participation as one of the milestones of democratic government as it provides a mechanism for involving people to participate in governing processes of government. This assertion supports the earlier views of Deegan (2002:43) who argued that participatory democracy models are based on the belief "that the very act of involvement is beneficial in that it permits all citizens, and not merely elites, to acquire a democratic political culture".

The inability to engage the communities beyond these gatherings means that community members do not have enough platforms to participate in the planning of the government's programmes and projects.  As Creighton (2005:17) indicates, public participation is necessary to ensure that citizens can influence the decision-makers in government, especially in situations where the decisions taken affect their lives directly. It is therefore safe to conclude that South African's service delivery programme is still characterized by many challenges that require urgent attention.

### 2.3.1. Policies and regulations governing community participation in South Africa

In addition to providing much needed services and infrastructure projects to its citizens, the South African government, through its local government spheres, is required to engage the public in its various governance processes. As Vivier *et al.*, (2015:81) claim, such process requires the government to directly engage with the citizens on key matters such as broader planning and policy decision making processes. It is these authors' view that an effective communication between the state and its people, if done properly, can strengthen government's responsiveness and deepen citizen engagements. Both the parliament and Provincial legislatures are constitutionally obliged to elicit public participation in directing their decision-making processes. The African National Congress-led government have since passed laws, proclaimed policies and develop strategies which allow for public to participate in their decision-making processes (Scott, 2009:38). Following are some of these policies:

### 2.3.1.1. Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996)

The South African constitution is considered one of the most progressive constitutions in the world. One of the many aspects that make it a model for other countries is that it makes specific provision for public to participate in the affairs of the government, particularly at a local level. Public participation in governance issues is entrenched in the country's institution, as outlined in sections 59(1) (a), 72(1) (a) and 118(1) (1) (Constitution of South Africa of 1996). On the other hand, Section 152 of the Constitution speaks of democracy, accountability, and the encouragement of involvement in matters of local government. Section 16(1) of the Local Government Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000, echoes this need for, and encouragement of participation in local matters, and adds that local government should do whatever it can to facilitate this process (*Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, 1996).

### 2.3.1.2. Municipal Structures Act, 1998 (Act117 of 1998)

The Municipal Structures Act, 1998 (Act 117 of 1998), outlines key functions relating to communication that different stakeholders within the municipal system must perform. For instance, chapter 3 of the Act stipulates that a Municipal Council must develop mechanisms to consult the community and community organizations in performing its functions and exercising its powers. The Act further directs executive mayors to give annual reports on the involvement of communities and community organizations within the municipal's jurisdiction on the affairs of their respective municipalities. In addition, the Act dictates that executive mayors must further ensure that, "regard is given to public views and report on the effect of consultation on the decisions made by the council" (*Municipal Structures Act, 1998 (Act 117 of 1998)*.

### 2.3.1.3. The Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000

The Municipal Systems Act 23 of 2000 stipulates that members of the public and all stakeholders should always be informed and invited to take part in all the processes, programmes, and projects that take place in the municipality. This involves efforts to promote communication within government about service delivery, transformation and about the critical role that public servants play in the lives of citizens. Section 4(c)(e) is very specific on the role of the municipal council in communicating with local communities. The section states that the local government council is duty-bound to encourage local communities to participate in municipal decision-making processes. It further states that the council must consult the community on a variety of issues that include amongst others; the quality, range and the impact of the services emanating from the municipality (*Municipal Systems Act, 2000* (Act 32 of 2000). On the other hand, Section 16(1) encourages public participation in the running of municipalities by participating in Integrated Development Plan (IDPs) meetings. Communities are further encouraged, through this Act, to contribute to societal development to improve council-community interaction and participation.

## 2.4.	The importance of communication between Municipalities and communities

Most government across the world have since realized the role that communication plays in creating a beneficial and congruent relationship between local governments and their constituencies. Research findings across the world show that effective communication between local government and its citizens play a significant role in ensuring that people in grassroots level stay abreast of the government's programmes (Chun, Shulman, Sandoval and Hovy, 2010:1; Rasila and Mudau, 2013; 134 USAID, 2013; Bello, Martin, Juanil and Kasim, 2017:22). According to Chun *et al.*, (2010:1), the concept of two-way information flow represents a paradigm shift for governments that have traditionally played the role of decision-making bodies concerned with service provision, information delivery and policy enforcement with little considerations for the views of the citizens.

Research findings have been consistent in identifying communication as the main tool for creating a healthy relationship between the government and its people and that if used correctly, it can be beneficial for both parties (Adedokun, Adeyemo and Olorunsol, 2010:101; Raga, Taylor and Gogi, 2012:237). For instance, Adedokun *et al.*, (2010:101) found that when communities at a grassroots level are directly involved in communication strategy, they often take ownership of the initiative of development rather than seeing themselves as beneficiaries of development. These views are supported by Bello *et al* (2017:16), who found that creation and establishment of required information by the local government could lead to citizen compliance of its regulations. It is for this reason that Rasila and Mudau, (2013:134) suggest that a working relationship between the government and the communities characterized by open communication can help identify viable and desirable initiatives beneficial to the rural communities.

USAID (2013, undated) notes that good information, communication and citizen participation at local government affairs offers local decision-makers the opportunity to

gain an insight and support of local communities. The organization further noted that by receiving better information and being able to communication and participate at local government affairs, citizens develop more sense on complex situation, understand challenges that decision-makers face while dealing with different situations. At same time, it provides opportunity to become part of the problem-solving by recognizing that many issues at local government level belong to them as well and they can be the actors of change. In studying municipal awareness and citizen satisfaction in Saudi Arabia, Almarshad (2015:13) found that citizens' knowledge, discussion, participation and learning about municipal activities and programs have positive effects on their satisfaction with the quality of the municipal services. In particular, the results revealed that citizen satisfaction is reflected in the clarity of municipal systems and procedures concerning municipal services.

It is therefore critical that leaders and community development agents engage in clear communication with their constituencies, so as to enlist the participation of community members in development related issues (Adedokun *et al.*, 2010:103). Against this background awareness of citizen on the performance of local authorities in many countries of the world are based on the seriousness of the government official to enlighten their citizens through the provision of reliable information in a timeously manner.

Effective communication is particularly important for municipalities such as Thulamela, which are pre-dominantly rural and characterized by limited access to information. Provision of information on government activities in a timeous and effective manner will ensure that the community stay abreast on what the local government is doing. This submission is supported by Adedokun *et al.*, (2010:104) who argues that effective rural communication places rural people in a position to have the necessary information for decision making and the relevant skills to improve their livelihood. This will in turn help in moving the people from individual centred deficit model of learning, behaviour development and change to a collective and community-focused model of participation, appreciation and equity. It can thus be construed that two-way, rather than one-way

communication between the government and its citizens can facilitate complete inclusion of the concerns and needs of the people in government if implemented correctly.

## 2.5.  Communication approaches in relation to government-citizen perspectives

It is government's responsibility to ensure that there is uninterrupted citizen awareness of local government activities and operations and this can only be achieved through effective communication. As Vivier *et al.,* (2015:89) noted, an effective communication interface between government and citizens has the potential to strengthen government responsiveness and deepen citizen engagement. It is therefore vital for municipalities to formulate and implement methods that will facilitate two-way communications between themselves and their constituencies. Research findings reveal several available channels that governments across the world use to actively engage with their constituencies and to keep them informed of their activities (Nabatchi, 2012:67 and Wukich; Mergel, 2015:711). Such platforms promote citizens' capacity to advocate for their interests and hold local officials accountable for their decisions and activities (Almarshad, 2015:25). According to Wukich and Mergel (2015:709), these approaches can be divided into three approaches, namely; the traditional one-on-one communication strategy, one-to-one strategies and many-to-many strategies.

### 2.5.1. The traditional one-on-one communication strategy

Governments that use this strategy control the flow of information. In most cases the information is not readily available and interested parties must seek out passive information, which is available upon request. The challenge with this method is that unlike other methods such as the two-way communication, one-on-one communication is often unidirectional with the information always cascading from the government to citizens (Wang and Lim, 2011:81). Ordinary members are not afforded the opportunity to participate in government-decision making process. The governments using this

channel often use methods such as bulletin board systems, websites information, press conferences and press releases, and official speeches to merely inform citizens about decisions taken (Wang and Lim, 2011:81).

## 2.5.2. Two-way communication channels

A 'two-way communication' is a process through which two or more parties communicated through a request and response approach. Through this process government officials and ordinary members of the community meet and freely engage with each other on a variety of issues (Moon, 2002:426). The channel allows the citizens to use the online services such as the email facility to make suggestions, ask questions in forums and receive answers from government representatives. This in turn enhances service delivery (Wescott, 2008:16). Unlike the one-on-one communication, this method seeks to raise awareness, increase the level of understanding and motivate active participation in public affairs. Governments using this method often organise public events and meetings. These activities are often used to promote communication between elected officials and citizens and to generate 'grassroots' (locally organised) activities to involve citizens through solicitation of their views (Tanaka, 2007:145).

In the South African context, the most common two-way communication channel that local governments use is that of Mayoral Imbizos. Imbizo are a uniquely South African channel of face-to-face communication between publicly elected representatives and the citizens (South Africa News Agency, 2016). Mahlatse, Baloyi and Lubinga, (2017:6) note that the main motivation behind Imbizo gatherings seems to be a need for interactive community mobilization rather than matters raised by the community members during these meetings. Public representatives often use the Imbizo meetings to update the electorate on the progress the government made in the implementation of its community projects and programmes (South Africa News Agency, 2016, undated). For instance, government departments such as the Department of Social

Development, Department of Health, South African Social Security Agency (SASSA), South African Police Services (SAPS), and Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), often use these meetings to conscientize community members about the services they render and how they can access them. These meeting also provide an opportunity for ordinary members of the community to ask questions and seek clarity from government officials on a variety of issues that affect them.

### 2.5.3. One-to-many communication channel

Of the three approaches, the one-to-many strategies represent a common approach in communicating with the public (Gastil, 2008 in WUkich and Mergel, 2015:709). Chiou and Lee (2013: undated) noted that most governments are now resorting to the use of Social Networking sites (SNSs) to communicate with the masses. These sites provide governments with an efficient interface for distributing information to many others simultaneously (Chiou and Lee, 2013: undated).  It is therefore not surprising that in South Africa, most local municipalities now have Facebook and Twitter pages as one-to-many communication platform where information about their activities are posted to reach many viewers simultaneously (Averweg, 2011:36). However, while the one-to-many strategies seem to be the most preferred, Wukich and Mergel, (2015:710) argue that the absence of the other approaches in the way governments communicate with their constituencies could be problematic. Their argument is based on the fact that government's online presence on social networking sites where most citizens interact with their associates is likely to result in citizens expecting it to be always available to interact with them the way they interact with their online friend (Zavattaro and Sementelli, 2014:257).

### 2.6.    Information Management channel in South Africa

A good communications strategy is essential in ensuring that local governments keep the communities they serve abreast about their service delivery programme.

Furthermore, communication is identified as the key driver in public participation. Following is a diagram showing how the information should be cascaded between the municipality and the communities under its jurisdiction.

Figure 2.1: Communication management flow (Information management channel)

**Community members**

**Civic structure**

**Traditional leader**

**Ward committee**

**Ward councillor/ CDW**

**Policy and direction**

**Communication department**

**Accountability**
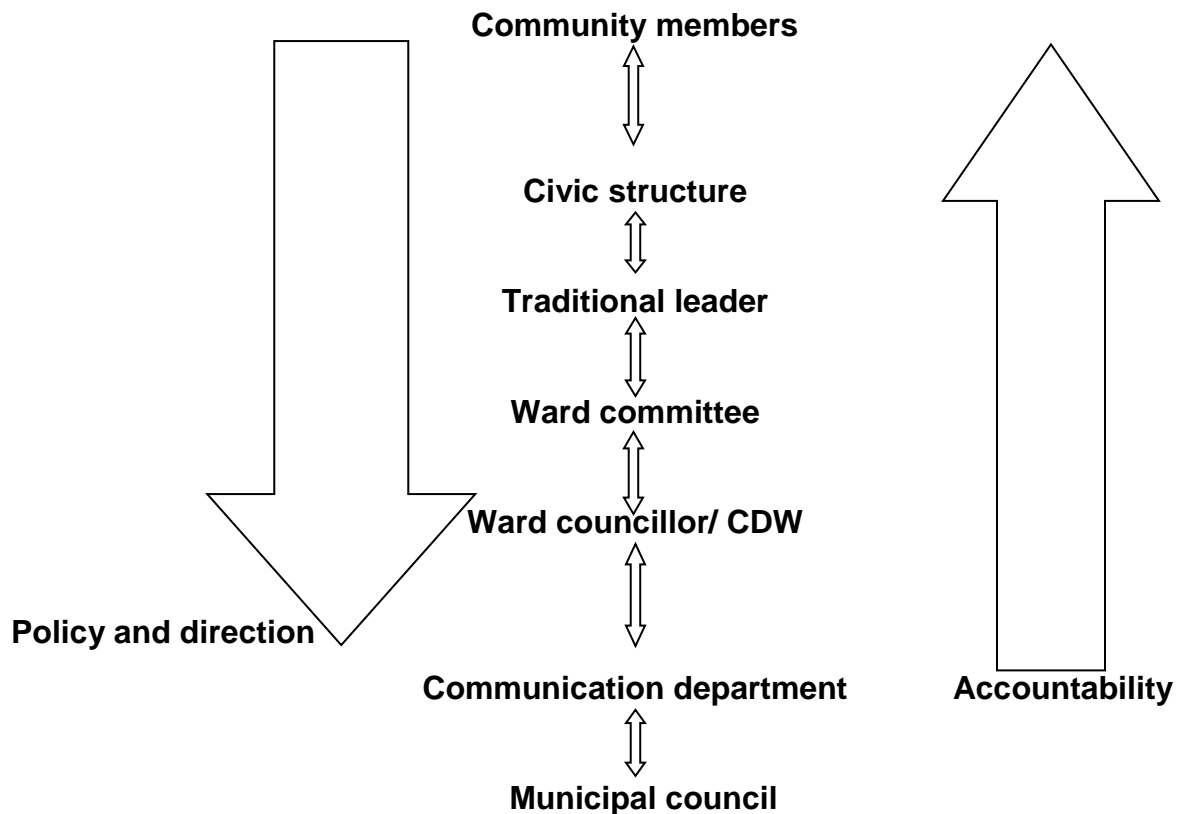
**Municipal council**

**Source:** South African Local Government Association (SALGA) (2011). *Guideline Document on the Roles and Responsibilities of Councillors, Political Structures and Officials.*

The above diagram shows how information should flow from municipal council to community members and from community members back to council.it seeks to indicate policy development direction versus accountability direction, in terms of information flow.

### 2.6.1. Community members

Community members are the recipients of all services provided by the municipality. They should, in line with the Batho Pele Principle, be in the know at all times, of the kind of services they will be provided. Information should always be handy to these members.

### 2.6.2. Civic organisation or structure

According to Ishmael, Bayat and Meyer, (1997:18) civic structures occupy prominent positions in several Black areas throughout South Africa. From their inception in the early 1970s, as grassroots structures which vehemently resisted state oppression, they mushroomed into highly influential organisation which played complex roles. In this case they are regarded as part of information channel to the ordinary citizen.

### 2.6.3. Traditional leader

A traditional leader is one where in rural areas all community meetings are to be held within his site. He authorises meetings at the village level. Just like ward councillors, traditional leaders are seen as "community-based tools that are used in speeding up service delivery within their jurisdictions" (Mhlanga, 2012:32). Their roles are clearly stipulated in several government prescripts and regulations. For instance, section 29(1) of the *Municipal Systems, 2000* (Act No.32 of 2000) states that traditional authorities should be consulted on the drafting of Integrated Development Plan (IDP). This statement supports earlier proclamation as outline in section 81(3) of the *Municipal Structures, 1998* (Act No. 177 of 1998). The Act stipulates that the Council must give the leader of authority the opportunity to express their views before taking a decision on any matter that directly affects the area of traditional authority. It is therefore important to regard him or her in the channel of information flow.

### 2.6.4. Ward Committees

According to the *Handbook for Municipal Councillors* (2006), ward committees are made up of members of a particular ward who are chosen by residents of the ward to advise the ward councillor. As Vivier *et al.,* (2015:83) note, ward committees are the key participatory structures for local government. This view is consistent with that of Steward (2003:23), who contends that these Committees exist mainly to ensure participation in local government, making them the key mechanisms for communication with the public. A ward committee is considered a formal communication channel between the community and the municipal council. They are also expected to provide support councillors by building a healthy relationship with communities (Mhlanga, 2012:32).

Ward committees have been solely established to raise issues with the ward councillor and then assist in informing residents about decisions and planning and projects that the council undertakes which have an impact on the ward. However, despite being the disseminator of government's information to the general public, it is apparent that ward committees are currently not functioning as envisaged. For instance, in assessing the role of public participation in IDP in the Thulamela municipality, Siphuma (2009:154) established that these committees are ineffective as key mechanisms for communicating with the public. The findings further revealed that the channels of disseminating information from the municipality to ward committees and then to the public is currently not effective.

### 2.6.5. Ward councillors

Ward councillors are legislatively mandated to consult with communities by hosting quarterly ward committee meetings. A ward councillor sits in council on behalf of constituencies. They convey decision taken by council to constituencies (South African

Local Government Association, 2006). According to Pretorius and Schurink, (2007:23) local government should practice good communication in order to strengthen their ward committee structures. Ward councillors have been identified as key stakeholders in this regard. Continuous public consultations enhance local government's transparency, credibility and integrity in the eyes of the public. However, despite the critical mandate that these Councillors are expected to play, research findings reveal that they seldom carry it out (World Bank, 2011; Mhlanga, 2012:49). In assessing the relationship between traditional leaders and Ward Councillors in the Mnquma local municipality, Mhlanga (2012:49) found that ward councillors did not schedule meetings with communities as expected. The World Bank (2011, undated) noted that councillors are seldom held accountable for failing to hold these meetings. This they attribute mainly to the fact that citizens are not even aware of what their mandate as councillors is. The situation is often exacerbated by the fact that the communication links between councillors, ward committees and the communities at a grassroots level are often insufficient (The World Bank, 2011, undated).

### 2.6.6. Community development workers

Community development workers (CDWs) are public official who work with municipalities where they live to bridge the gap between service provision by government and access by communities. They have been identified as one of the many key stakeholders that the government has put in place to create a synergy between the Local governments and their constituencies. It is for this reason that they are often defined as 'participatory change agents' whose primary role is to help members of their communities in which they live (Raga *et al*., 2012:235). CDWs are required to address amongst others, the lack of information, knowledge and poor communication that communities experience in relation to government services. (South African Local Government Association, 2006, undated). They are expected to conscientize people; in particular, the poor, about their constitutional rights regarding service delivery and to

help them to understand how they can participate in the development plans for their communities (Raga *et al.*, 2012:235).

However, despite the significance of their role, the World Bank has found that CDWs are confronted by many challenges that hinder them from effectively implementing community facilitation. One such challenge as identified by the World Bank, is the poor mentoring and support that CDWs receive from the departments from which they are seconded (2011, undated). The World Bank concludes that lack of support results in their potential to foster communication between citizens and state remains underutilized

### 2.6.7. Communication department

The communication department is a section in the municipal administration charged with the responsibility of ensuring that local people access information about council decisions and service delivery plans.

### 2.7. Communication channels/forums used by municipalities in South Africa

As earlier highlighted, an effective communication interface between government and citizens can strengthen government responsiveness and deepen citizen engagement. In South Africa, the research shows that the government uses a variety of platforms nationally and locally to provide information to, as well as receive information from, individual residents and communities (Vivier *et al.,* 2015:81). What follows are some of the most common communication channels that South Africa's municipalities use to engage with communities they serve.

### 2.7.1. Imbizo

Imbizo are "a uniquely South African channel of face-to-face communication between publicly elected representatives and the citizens" (South Africa News Agency, 2016:

15). Public representatives often use the Imbizo meetings to update the electorate on the progress the government made in the implementation of its community projects and programmes (South Africa News Agency, 2016). Despite being a great tool to connect the local government and its constituencies, research findings reveal that this platform is not working as well as initially envisaged. For instance, Kondlo (2010:387) contends that the Imbizo meetings lack authentic participation. This argument is based on the fact that these meetings often fail to bring forth much needed solutions to the day-to-day problems confronting the communities. Kondlo, (2010:388) claims that these initiatives fail to yield positive outcomes because office bearers often relegate the role of the community members to mere observers instead of actively participating in the process. Kondlo's views are consistent with those of Rasila and Mudau, (2014:139) who argue that government structures often use these platforms as nothing but a social mobilisation tool for the politicians. Thus, while Izimbizo have the potential to bring together the government and the people to actively work together in finding solutions to many problems confronting communities, the platform is currently beset with many challenges, making the exercise a one-sided affair. For the Izimbizo to work, both parties should come together as equal partners who are working towards the attainment of a common goal.

## 2.7.2. Information Communication Technology

The new advent of information technologies in the country has led to the emergence of new communication opportunities (Vivier *et al.*, 2015:83). These range from municipal websites to mobile applications and social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. Vivier *et al.*, (2015:83) found that the government and its citizens have since resorted to use these platforms to communicate and interact with one another. Government efforts to expand access to ICTs, and to market government services through ICTs, especially into rural areas, have largely taken the form of community centres called Thusong Service Centres (TSC) or Digital Community Hubs (DCHs) (Vivier *et al*, 2015:83). These provide computers for people to "access information related to business, government,

education, banking, and more; they are also expected to enhance the capacity of communities in utilizing ICTs" (Kariuki, 2010 in Vivier *et al*, 2015:83).

## 2.8.   Factors hindering effective communication between municipalities and citizens

Despite guarantees made in the country's constitution and other prescripts, the country's institutions still struggle to fully involve community members in its decision-making processes. Scott argues that many of these institutions are still confronted by implementation challenges. The author attributes this problem to a lack of a uniform approach and set of minimum standards for public participation within the country's legislative sector (Scott, 2009:65). These views are consistent with the findings of the State of Local Government Report, published in 2009. The findings reveal that increased service delivery protests demonstrate the vagueness of the communication channels between government and communities, leading to communication broken down. This is attributed to municipalities' trend of investing inadequate investments in public participation strategies, structures and processes including communication and complaint management systems (*State of Local Government in South Africa report*, 2009). Not having a clear communication mode allowing for full participation limits a government's sources of options and idea. This also exposes the process to corruption, which the report found, would be addressed through public scrutiny if citizens were more involved.

Research findings further reveal that community members' general lack of interest in government programmes often renders its communication strategies ineffective. According to The World Bank (2011, undated), the communication gap between politicians and the citizens is that people choose to remain quiet even when they wish to talk. This is attributed to the belief citizens hold that they will not be heard even if they speak out, rendering their efforts fruitless (The World Bank, 2011, undated). Community members' reluctance to speak out could also be attributed to their lack of trust on elected leadership as well as their disillusionment with government's inability to delivery services (Mosotho, 2013:18). Mosotho noted that community may no longer have trust

on the elected leadership's ability to effectively deliver on programmes and projects. Citizens may also be disillusioned with the government constant's inability to always address their needs due to the lack of funding.

## 2.9.    Summary

This chapter focused on the review of the existing literature on the Municipal-citizen communication channels and their implications on service delivery. The chapter starts off by reviewing the nature of communication between local government and the citizens. This was followed by the review of the information Management channel commonly used by municipality in South Africa. The literature further reveals that an open communication channel between government and community members can be beneficial for both parties.  The review of literature further revealed that although open communication is beneficial, there are still many factors that hinder effective communication between municipalities and citizens. These include: government Imbizo meetings lacking authentic participation; poor mentoring and support that CDWs receive from government departments; and community members' general lack of interest in government programmes. These factors need to be eliminated if the municipality is to succeed in creating an open relationship with its citizens.

# Chapter 3

## Research Methodology

### 1.1.   Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed existing literature on municipal-citizen communication channels and their implications on service delivery. Chapter three outlines the research method and design used in this study. Aspects covered include the design adopted, population and sample, research data and data collection procedures. The chapter also covers sections outlining data analysis procedures, research validity, research reliability. Finally, the ethical considerations taken into account in conducting this study are addressed.

### 1.2.   Research methodology

Creswell (2008:3) defines research as "a process of steps used to collect and analyse information to increase our understanding of a topic or an issue". It consists of three steps, namely; pose a question, collect data to answer the question and present an answer to the question. On the other hand, Burns and Grove (2001:223) define research methodology as the total strategy, from the identification of the problem to the final plans for data gathering and analysis. As Kumar (2011:222) noted, "a researcher has an obligation to use appropriate methodology, within his/her knowledge base, in conducting  a  study". The research methodology as outlined below, was deemed appropriate for this study.

## 1.3. Research design

Research design is defined as "a research design as a formula or procedure based on the researcher's notional beliefs, which describes the choice of participants, the approaches to be employed to gather information, as well as how the data will be anatomised" (Maree, 2007:70). For this study, a case study research design was adopted. A case study is a "transparadigmatic and transdisciplinary heuristic that involves the careful delineation of the phenomena for which evidence is being collected (event, concept, program, process, etc.)" (Van Wynsberghe and Khan, 2007:2). The rational for selecting the case study as a research design was to obtain in-depth understanding of the subject under investigation from Dumasi residents who have been hard hit by service delivery protests in recent times. Furthermore, the approach assisted the researcher to explore and investigate contemporary real-life phenomenon through the detailed contextual analysis of Dumasi village (Zainal, 2007:21). Such an approach resulted in a deep and in-depth analysis of the subject under study. A mixed, concurrent method with triangulation approach was adopted. The term mixed methods refers to "a methodical mixing of the qualitative and quantitative approaches into a single investigation". The method embodies strengths of both the qualitative and quantitative methodologies and results in outstanding outcomes (Wisdom and Creswell, 2013:1).

### 1.3.1. Qualitative research

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000:3) qualitative research is "a situated activity that locates the observer in the world". It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that makes the world visible. These practices... turn the world into a series of representations including fieldnotes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. According to Bryman (1988:8), "the way in which people being studied understand and interpret their social reality is one of the

central themes of qualitative research". For this study, a qualitative approach was employed to gain an in-depth insight on how community members perceived the communication channels used by the municipality to communicate with communities.

### 1.3.2. Quantitative research

Quantitative research is a kind of research mainly aimed "at investigating the social world in ways which emulate the 'scientific method' as used in the natural sciences, with an emphasis on hypothesis testing, causal explanations, generalisation and prediction" (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003:14). On the other hand, Mark (1996: 210) defines quantitative design as the study of phenomena using numerical means. The approach places more emphasising on counting, describing and using standard statistics such as means and standard deviation. In this study, a quantitative approach was used to collect information such as the demographic information of respondents (age, gender, marital status, level of education). Data on the views of ordinary members of the community of Dumasi village on the municipal-citizen communication channels was also collected and presented using tables and graphical tools (pie charts, bar graphs, line graphs etc). This information was gathered through a structured questionnaire with close-ended questions as primary sources.

### 1.4.    Study area

The study was conducted in Dumasi village, a remote community located within the Thulamela Local Municipality area, in the Vhembe District municipality, in the Limpopo Province. The village of Dumasi where information dissemination challenges issues are considered is located within a 40-kilometre radius from the Thulamela Local municipality headquarters. The village is one of the villages that have experienced several service-delivery protests in the last few years, and results thereof have affected it badly in many ways. Below is a map showing where the study area is located.

Figure 3.1. Map of Limpopo Province showing the study area
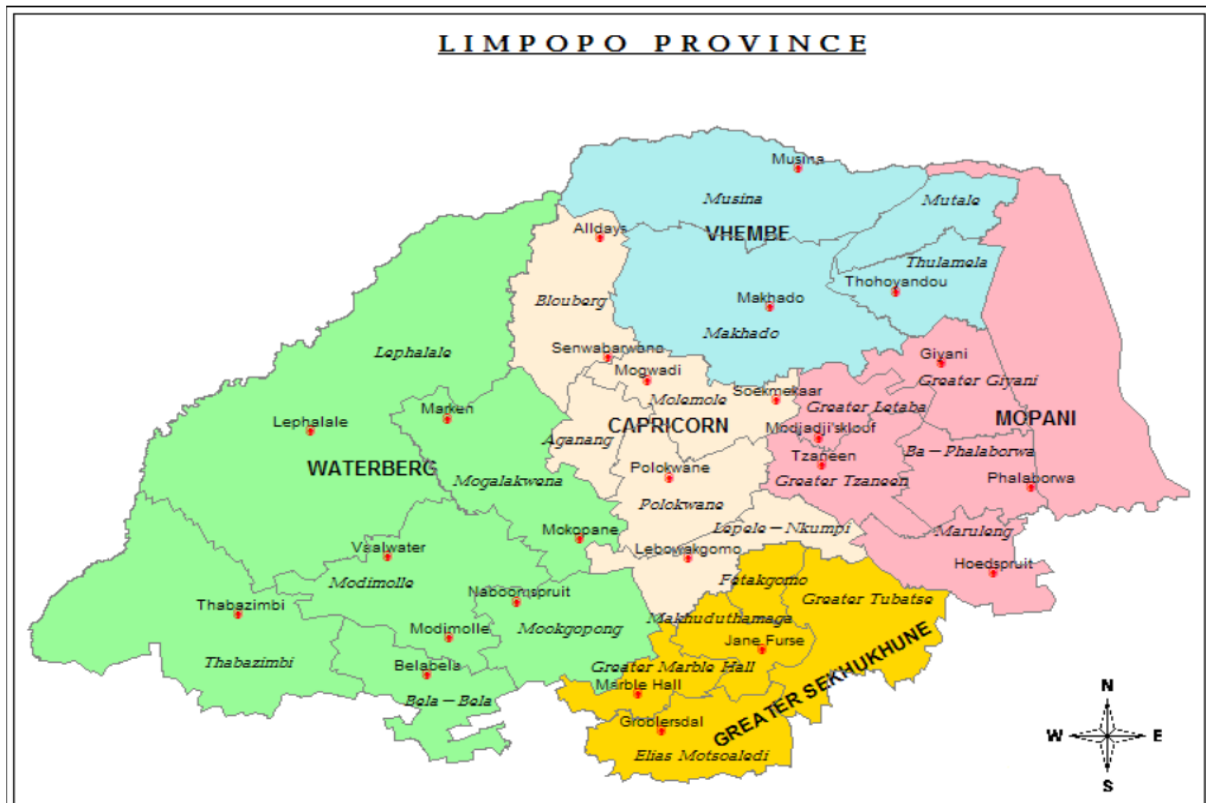


Source: Thulamela Municipality (2017)

## 1.5. Population

Babbie (2011:366) defines a population as the "the subjects that will be the focus point to draw conclusions". The population for this study comprised of multifaceted groups. These included community members of the Dumasi village in the Thulamela Municipality, members of civic structures from the village, Ward Committee members of Ward 19 of the Thulamela Municipality, and municipal employees working for its communication division. The 2011 national census revealed that Dumasi village has a population of 2154 (Statistics South Africa, 2012, undated). The specific population of subjects considered in this study are, members of the civic structures (12), Ward Committee members (10), Municipal employees working within the communication division (7) and Community Development Workers (2).

## 1.6. Sample and sampling methods

A sample refers to a smaller selection of individuals from the population (Neuman, 2011:240). Purposive and simple random sampling methods were used for this study to select 15 and 30 respondents respectively. Purposive sampling relates to a process of "selecting a sample on the basis of researcher 's own knowledge of the population, its elements, and the nature of aims of the research" (Nayak and Singh, 2015:84). Maxwell (1997:87) notes that, "particular settings, persons, or events are deliberately selected for the important information they can provide that cannot be gotten as well from other choices." Therefore, the researcher purposefully selected a sample of fifteen key informants who were considered to possess a deep insight of the topic under investigation. The sample was divided into following segments: civic structure members (5), Ward committee members (5) and municipal employees (3) and Community Development Workers (2). The use of a purposive sampling ensured that all key constituencies of relevance to the subject matter are covered (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003:79). Respondents from these groups participated in the qualitative phase of the study.

Simple random sampling was used to randomly select 30 ordinary community members to participate in the quantitative phase of the study. Simple random sampling method will ensure that every member of the community has equal opportunities of being selected into the study (Nayak and Singh, 2015:82). The following table shows the breakdown of the sampling procedures of this study.

Table 3.1. A summary of the sampling procedures

| Types of Respondents | Population size | Sample size | Sampling method |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ordinary community members | 2154 | 30 | Simple random |
| Members of civic structures | 12 | 5 | Purposive |
| Ward Committee Members | 10 | 5 | Purposive |
| Municipal employees from Communication Division | 7 | 3 | Purposive |
| Community Development Workers | 2 | 2 | None |
| Total | 2185 | 45 | |

## 1.7.    Data collection

Cohen, Manion and Marrison, (2000:193) define data collection as a process of obtaining evidence in a systematic way to ascertain answers to the research problem. There are several methods of collecting data, which depend on the nature of the research, these are often referred to as data collection tools. Data collections tools refer to instruments used to collect the information needed for data analysis (De Vos, 1998:123). Most common data collection tools include interviews, observation, focus group discussions (qualitative) and questionnaire surveys (quantitative). For this study, semi-structured interviews and questionnaires were used as data collection tools.

### 1.7.1.  Data collection tool: qualitative phase

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect the qualitative data from the key-informants. Semi-structured interviews are "those in-depth interviews where the respondents answer pre-set open-ended questions" (Jamshed, 2014:87). For this study, a semi-structured interview guide with a list of questions was designed before the interviews commence (appendix 3). The guide contained questions aimed at eliciting answers from respondents on how the perceived the municipal-citizen communication channels and their implications on service delivery.  This method allowed the researcher to gain an in-depth insight on the perceptions of respondents regarding the subject under study. The method further allowed for deeper probing on issues relating to the subject under investigation.

#### 1.7.1.1.    Interview process

Respondents were interviewed on dates and times convenient to them. Prior arrangements, made mostly through telephonic appointments were made with respondents, prior to the interviews. This was to ensure that the respondents were aware of the researcher's pending visit and that they are available to be interviewed.

Making appointments further afforded the respondents the latitude to choose the venue and time convenient to them. On the day of the interview, the researcher first explained the purpose of the study to each respondent prior the commencement of the interview. Respondents were also informed that the interviews will be recorded, using a digital recorder. However, it was emphasised that the recordings were only for academic purposes and would not be publicly shared with outsiders.

Respondents were also afforded the opportunity to ask questions on any issue relating to their participation. This process was necessary as it allowed respondents to make an informed decision on whether to participate in the study or not. Respondents were then required to give consent to being interviewed by signing a consent form (Appendix 5). Interviews were conducted in both iTshivenda and English. iTshivenda was used with members of the civic structures who were not conversant with the English language. Each interview lasted an average of 20 minutes.

## 1.7.2. Data collection tool: Quantitative study

Data for the quantitative phase was collected with the use of a questionnaire. Polit and Hungler (1997:466) define a questionnaire as "a method of gathering information from respondents about attitudes, knowledge, beliefs and feelings". The questionnaire was designed to gather information about ordinary community members' feelings about the municipal-citizen communication channels and their implications on service delivery. The questionnaire will contain questions that require responses on a Likert-type scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (Strongly agree). Apart from exploring various issues relating to information management chain, biographical data of the entrepreneurs were collected. The questions were formulated in Tshivenda, a spoken language for the locals. This was to ensure that respondents clearly understood the questions being answered.

A research assistant was employed to assist both illiterate and semi-illiterate respondents to complete their questionnaires. As with the key-respondents, the researcher first explained the purpose of the study to each respondent before they were given the questionnaire to complete. Respondents were also afforded the opportunity to ask questions on any issue relating to their participation. This process was necessary as it allowed respondents to make an informed decision on whether to participate in the study or not. Respondents were then required to give consent to being interviewed by signing a consent form (Appendix 5).

## 1.8. Data Analysis

Mrinde (2014: 39) defines data analysis as "a process of synthesizing data, searching for patterns, discovering what is important as well as what is to be learned and deciding what to tell others". The author further argues that data analysis is necessary because it "enables the researcher to summarize, categorize and organize the collected data in such a way that it is possible to adequately answer the research questions". Data analysis process is performed in both qualitative and quantitative research. In qualitative research data analysis is undertaken to draw conclusions and recommendations relating to a study question. In this regard, Terre Blanche and Durrheim, (1999:140) state that analysis involves reading through it repeatedly and engaging in breaking the data down as well as building it up again in a novel way. This is called elaborating and interpreting.

### 1.8.1. Data analysis: Qualitative Phase

In this study, Thematic Content Analysis (Creswell, 2009:184) was used to analyze the collected data. The collected data was reduced and analyzed by means of thematic codes and concepts in a seven-step process proposed by Creswell (2009:184) (Figure 3.1). Firstly, the researcher prepared the data for analysis. This process involved

transcribing and coding of data from the audio-tapes. The second step involved the researcher reading the text and noting items of interest that emerged from data. Then the transcripts were read carefully in their entirety. Some ideas were jotted down as they came to mind. Transcripts were then placed in such a way that those that were interesting and short were on top of the pile. One then chose one transcript at a time and reviewed it. During the review of the transcripts, the researcher asked himself questions that shed light on the underlying meanings to the data given.

The above step was followed by sorting the emerged items into themes. Step number four entailed examining proto-themes. This will then be followed by step number five. This step will involve re-examining text for relevant incidents of data per theme. In step six, the researcher will engage in the construction of the final form of each theme. Lastly, the researcher reported results of each theme and extract quotes from the original text to help communicate the meaning (Figure 3.1). As the principal researcher becomes more familiar with the data, it will make it easier to make logical conclusions from the interview questions and what is distilled from the review of literature.

Figure 3.2. Step by step approach used to analyse data using thematic content analysis

**Step 1**: Prepare the data for analysis

**Step 2:** Read the text and note items of interest

**Step 3**: Sorting items of interest into themes

**Step 4**: Examining proto-themes

**Step 5:** Re-examining text for relevant incidents of data per

**Step 6**: Constructing the final form of each theme

Step 7: Reporting results of each theme: quotes from original text used to help communicate
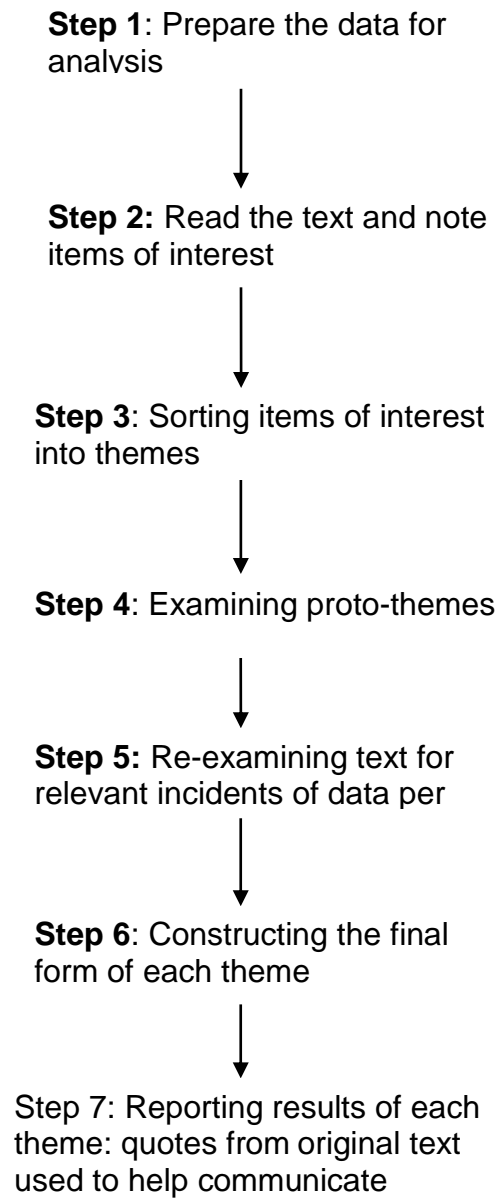
Source: Creswell (2009)

## 1.8.2.  Quantitative phase

The first step in data analysis involves the capturing of the collected data. A template was designed using an MS Excel program for the purpose of capturing the collected data. The principal researcher captured the data into the template. The MS Excel file containing the captured was then imported into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0 for Windows for analysis purposes.  This was done for statistical analysis to be carried out. Firstly, descriptive statistics was applied to perform basic characteristics of the sampled respondents. This was done by employing both frequency and means to describe the data. This includes data related to gender, marital status, age, education level, and employment status of the sampled respondents. Column graphs and pie charts were generated to clearly present the results.

A Mann-Whitney test was performed to determine whether significant differences existed on answering tendencies of respondents according to their age and gender categories. Results of the Mann Whitney test assisted in reaching a decision of whether gender and age group played a role on how respondents perceived the municipal-citizen relationship and its implications on service delivery. On the other hand, a Kruskal-Wallis Test was used to determine whether perceptions of respondents on the same subject differed across age groups. An Independent T-test and Anova test were used to test for statistically significant differences in means (Neuman, 2011:240).

## 1.9. Ethical Considerations

The following main ethical issues were addressed in this study:

### 1.9.1. Ethical clearance

Ethical clearance was obtained from the University's Research Ethics Committee (REC) clearing the way for the study to be carried out with human subjects.

### 1.9.2. Informed consent and voluntary participation

Securing permission from the respondents to involve them in the study is one of the most important considerations to consider in research. It is "considered unethical to collect information without the knowledge of participants, and their expressed willingness and informed consent" (Kumar, 2011: 220). It is therefore important to inform respondents beforehand about the aim and nature of the research, who is undertaking it, who is funding it, its likely duration, as well as the possible consequence of the research. In this study, the researcher explained to all participants the nature and purposes of the study. It was also emphasized that their participation in the study was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw any time they wanted. Participants signed an informed consent as an indication that they knew what the study was all about and that they were willing participants (Appendix 7). The signing of the consent form was also an indication that the purpose of the study was explained to them and that they were afforded the opportunity to ask clarity seeking questions before the commencement of the interviews. A written consent was also secured to have the interviews with the respondents recorded using a digital audio recorder.

### 1.9.3. Privacy, confidentiality and no harm

According to Ritchie and Lewis (2003:67), confidentiality means "avoiding the attribution of comments, in reports or presentations, to identified participants" while anonymity means "the identity of those taking part not being known outside the research team". For this study confidentiality of the respondents was preserved by ensuring that both direct attribution (comments linked to a name or a specific role of participants) and indirect attribution (reference to a collection of characteristics that might help identify participants) were avoided. On the other hand, anonymity was ensured by using pseudo to identify the participants instead of their real names. Secondly, information that could have made the participants' identity easily identifiable was excluded from both the interviews and questionnaire survey. This included physical and postal addresses as well as the telephone numbers of the participants. This information was explained to the participants prior to the commencement of every data collection activity.

### 1.9.4. No harm: Explain how study avoids any harm to participants.

In this study, the researcher put measures in place to ensure that the participants were protected from any harm, be emotional, physical or psychological harm. The following measures were put in place to ensure that participants were not harmed by their participation in the study. Careful considerations were made while designing the questions for both the interviews and surveys. This included avoiding asking questions with sexual connotations and avoiding language that others may consider too explicit.

### 1.10. Summary

Chapter three outlines the methodologies used in carrying out the two phases (i.e. qualitative and quantitative) of the study. In particular, the chapter covers the following aspects: Firstly, the sampling methods used to sample the respondents who participated in both phases are outlined. Secondly, data collection methods used to

collect data from respondents from both phases are explained. Thirdly, the methods used to analyse the collected data are outlined. Lastly, the chapter further outlines the ethical considerations which were considered during the carrying out of the study.

# CHAPTER 4

## Results, Analysis and Discussion

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter is devoted to the description of the results of the study on exploring Municipal-citizen communication channels of the Thulamela local municipality of the Limpopo Province, and their implications on service delivery. This study used both quantitative and qualitative methods to collect and analyse data. The researcher used, charts, figures, tables and explanations to analyse and organize data into simpler accounts. The purpose of this chapter is to present and interpret the empirical findings of this research.

The main aim of this study was to investigate municipal-citizen communication channels of the Thulamela local municipality and its implications on service delivery. The objectives of the study were to:

- determine the effectiveness of the Thulamela Municipality's communication channels as perceived by community members.
- investigate the most suitable platforms to improve municipal-citizen communication in the Thulamela Municipality as perceived by community members, and
- suggest ways the Thulamela Municipality can adopt to enhance the way they communicate their service delivery strategies to local communities.

The chapter presents the findings from the data collection instruments that included questionnaire, interviews, document analysis and the observation schedule. The gathered data are presented according to the aim and objectives of the study as stated in chapter one. The results are hereby presented in two phases: phase 1 - qualitative study, and phase 2 - quantitative study.

## 4.2. Phase 1: Presentation of qualitative results

Under this phase, the results from the qualitative study are presented. As indicated in the previous chapter, sources of information for qualitative phase were fifteen key informants. The sample was divided into following segments: civic structure members (5), Ward committee members (5) and municipal employees (3) and Community Development Workers (2). Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed through the use of Thematic Content Analysis.

### 4.2.1. Demographical information of qualitative interviews

The researcher required the personal information of respondents, this included respondent's gender, age, village name, marital status, Level of education and employment status. Demographical information was useful in determining and comparing patterns amongst different categories of the research participants such as how respondents perceived the effectiveness on the municipality's communication strategy. Table 4.1 provides the demographic data of the quantitative survey.

Table 4.1. Demographic details of respondents who participated in the study (n = 15)

| | | | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Female | | 7 | 46.7 |
| | Male | | 8 | 53.3 |
| Age group | | 25 | 1 | 6.7 |
| | | 28 | 1 | 6.7 |
| | | 30 | 1 | 6.7 |
| | | 32 | 1 | 6.7 |
| | | 35 | 1 | 6.7 |
| | | 36 | 1 | 6.7 |
| | | 38 | 1 | 6.7 |
| | | 40 | 2 | 13.3 |
| | | 41 | 1 | 6.7 |
| | | 42 | 1 | 6.7 |
| | | 43 | 1 | 6.7 |
| | | 45 | 1 | 6.7 |
| | | 49 | 1 | 6.7 |
| | | 55 | 1 | 6.7 |
| Marital status | Divorced | | 1 | 6.7 |
| | Married | | 12 | 80 |
| | Single | | 1 | 6.7 |
| | Widowed | | 1 | 6.7 |
| Educational qualification | High school but no matric | | 1 | 6.7 |
| | Matric | | 6 | 40 |
| | Post-graduate | | 5 | 33.3 |
| | Post-matric | | 3 | 20 |
| Employment status | Contract work | | 1 | 6.7 |
| | Permanently employed | | 7 | 46.7 |
| | Self-employed | | 1 | 6.7 |
| | Unemployed | | 5 | 33.3 |
| | Volunteer work | | 1 | 6.7 |
| | Total | | 15 | 100 |

In terms of gender, 8 (53 %) were males and 7 (47 %) were females. 12 (80 %) of the respondents were married, 1 (7%) was divorced, 1 (7%) was single and 1(7%) was widowed. As far as academic qualifications were concerned, 1 (7%) had reached high school but not matric, 6 (40%) reported to hold a Grade 12 certificate, 3 (20%) held a post-matric qualification, and 5 (33%) held a post-graduate qualification. The majority of the respondents, 7 (47%) were permanently employed, and 5 (33%) were unemployed, 1 (7 %) did volunteer work, and 1 (7%) was self-employed.

**4.2.2. Communication channels used by the Thulamela Local Municipality as perceived respondents**

The structure of an organization determines the flow of communication (Widhiastuti, 2012:185). According to Sethi & Seth, (2009:87) communication channels are the media chosen by the organization to send the messages to its stakeholders. Organizational structure assists in making effective flow of communication and ensures that communication channels are followed.

Table 4.2. Results of the municipal-citizen communication channels as perceived by respondents

| Communication channels | Females (n = 7) | Males (n = 8) | Total (n = 15) |
|---|---|---|---|
| a) Councillor | ●●●● | ●●●● | 8 |
| b) Community meetings | ●●● | ●●●●● | 8 |
| c) Ward Committee Members | ●● | ●●●●● | 7 |
| d) Imbizos | ●● | ●●● | 5 |
| e) Civic Structures | ●● | ●●● | 5 |
| f) Community based forums (Pastors, youth, and Business forums). | ●● | ● | 3 |
| g) IDP Forums | ●● | ● | 3 |
| h) Printed materials (brochures, diaries and calendars | | ●●● | 3 |
| i) Mayor Mahosi-Tihosi Forums | ● | ● | 2 |
| j) Traditional Leaders | ● | ● | 2 |
| k) Community Development Workers | ● | | 1 |

Table 4.2 reveals that Councilors 8 (53 %), community meetings 8 (53 %), Ward Committee members 7 (47 %), Imbizos, 5 (33 %) and Civic structures 5 (33 %) were identified as the main communication channels used by Thulamela Local Municipality. Other identified channels included community-based forums, IDP forums, printed materials and Mayor Mahosi-Tihosi forums and traditional leaders. The following are views expressed by some of the respondents with regards to the communication channels:

> *The municipality communicates with the communities through the ward Councillor. The Ward Councillor held meetings with the ward committee and civic structure members, who then communicate with their community members through the community meetings.*

*Thulamela municipality use different channels to communicate to local communities: It uses the Ward Councillor, ward committee members and also assisted by the Community Development Workers (CDWs).*

Female respondent

*Thulamela municipality uses different channels to communicate with the communities: the first channel that the municipality uses is Imbizo, the municipality call for gathering of different communities in order to inform the communities on how the municipality operates and also to provide feedback on the input made by communities in the IDP forums. The second channel that the municipality uses to communicate is through the ward committee meetings, in these meetings the communities have the opportunity to give input about the future development on their area. The municipality also uses the media and articles to communicate with the communities.*

Male respondent

*Thulamela municipality uses Imbizo meetings, IDP forums, Youth forums, Business forums, Pastors' forums, Traditional leaders and Traditional healers' forums to communicate with the communities.*

Female respondent

*Thulamela municipality uses the printed materials such as broaches, calendars and diaries, we also use the forums to communicate such as the Imbizo, Mayor-Mahosi-Tihosi forum, Mayor and Pastors forum, Mayor and SANCO forum. Furthermore, the municipality use feedback sessions and ward committee conference were the municipality officials meet with the ward committee members.*

### 4.2.3. Respondents' views on the integration of community's inputs into the IDP.

Table 4.3. Respondents' views on the integration of community's inputs into the IDP

| 3. Respondents' views on the integration of community members' inputs into the IDP | Females (n=07) | Males (n=08) | Total **(n=15)** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Community members' inputs are adequately integrated | ●●●●● | ●●●●● | 10 (67 %) |
| Community members' inputs are not adequately integrated | ●● | ●●● | 5 (33 %) |

Table 4.3 reveals that 10 (67%) of the respondents believe that the inputs that community members make during the IDP forum meetings are adequately integrated in to the municipality's IDP. However, 5 (33 %) of the respondents hold a different view, arguing that the municipality does not consider the public's inputs while drafting its IDP document. The differing views can be seen in the following excerpts:

> *I would say yes, their inputs are adequately covered. There are several projects that are being implemented in our village such as water reticulation and electricity as results of the inputs that community members made during the IDP Forums.*

Male respondent

> *I would say yes, they do. The challenge is that communities expect the services to be delivered with immediate effect and this is not how the municipality operates.*

Female respondent

*My view is that most of the inputs from the community members are not adequately integrated into the municipality's IDP. My argument is based on the fact that for us to receive the services as outlined in the IDP we must first fight with the municipality. The municipality also has a problem of undermining other communities because they have a tendency of removing some villages in the IDP and replace them with other villages.*

Female respondent

*No, it is not adequately integrated in the municipality's IDP because during feedback meetings the community's inputs would not be included in the municipality's IDP document.*

Male respondent

### 4.2.4. Respondents' views on the convening of IDP forum meetings

Table 4.4. Respondents' views on the convening of IDP forum meetings

| Respondents' views on the convening of IDP forums | Females (n=07) | Males (n=08) | Total (n=15) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Proper considerations are put in place to ensure that all stakeholders are adequately represented | ●●●●●● | ●●●●● | 11 (73 %) |
| No proper considerations since community members are excluded from the forums | ● | ●●● | 4 (27 %) |

The results on the convening of IDP Forums as outlined in Table 4.4 reveal that 11 (73 %) believe that measures are put in place to ensure that all relevant stakeholders are

sufficiently represented during the IDP forum meetings.  27 % of the respondents are of the views that the municipality does not consider ordinary members of the community when organizing these meetings. The following are differing views by male and female respondents on the subject:

*Yes, because we can hear the invitations from the radio announcing the next date of the IDP Forum. The Ward Councillor also invites members of Ward Committee and civic structures. This ensures that the invite reaches every concerned citizen so that they can actively participate during the IDP Forums.*

Female respondent

*No, because they usually use the media in convening of IDP forums, the municipality should work together with the community leaders to communicate with the communities.*

Male respondent

*I would say no because community members are not invited to attend such meetings. Only members of civic structures, Ward Committee members and members of the ANC are invited by the Ward Councillor through SMSs.*

Male respondent

### 4.2.5. Respondents' views on the effectiveness of platforms by municipality to provide feedback

Table 4.5. Respondents' views on the effectiveness of platforms by municipality to provide feedback

| Effectiveness of platforms for feedback | Females (n=07) | Males (n=08) | Total (n=15) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Platforms used are not effective and do not adequately provide feedback to community members | ●●● | ●●●●● | 8 |
| Platform used are very effective in providing feedback to communities | ●● | ●●● | 5 |
| No opinion expressed | ● | ● | 2 |

Table 4.5 presents the respondents' views on the effectiveness of platforms currently used by the Thulamela Local Municipality to provide feedback to communities on the implementation of its programs. The table reveals that only 5 respondents (33 %) believe that the platforms are effective in providing adequate and timeous feedback communities. 8 (54%) of the respondents are of the view that the methods are ineffective and do not provide adequate feedback to communities. 2 (13 %) refrained from offering an opinion on the subject. Below are some of the contrasting views from the respondents:

> *The platforms used are very effective because the municipality provide feedback through the Ward Councillor. The Ward Councillor holds meetings with the ward committee members and the civic structure members, ward committee members and civic structure members then communicate with their communities via the community meetings providing them with feedbacks.*
>
> Female respondent

50

*The platforms used are effective because we hold monthly ward committee meetings with members of the civic structures of all 10 villages found in Ward 14*

Male respondent

*I think the platforms are ineffective because people given the responsibility of providing feedback are not trustworthy as they sometimes provide false information to intentionally mislead community members in order to gain their favour or support*

Male respondent

*Not effective, because the municipality usually provide feedback after the community gathers and protest.*

Female respondent

## 4.2.6. Respondents' perceived barriers to successful implementation of Municipal-citizen communication platforms

Table 4.6. Respondents' perceived barriers to successful implementation of Municipal-citizen communication platforms

| Barriers hindering successful implementation of communication channels | Females (n=07) | Males (n=08) | Total (n=15) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Community members' inability to attend meetings | ●●● | ●●●● | 7 |
| Community members' lack of understanding of the IDP programme | | ●● | 2 |
| Community members' lack of trust on the credibility of feedback given by members of the civic structures | | ● | 1 |
| Communication breakdown between Ward committee members and civic structure members | | ● | 1 |
| Municipality focusing on communities during the electioneering period only | ● | | 1 |
| Community members' lack of understanding of the Municipality operation processes | ● | | 1 |
| Municipality's inability to follow up on community members' inputs | ● | | 1 |
| Limited resources | | ● | 1 |

Table 4.6. reveals barriers to successful implementation of municipality-citizen communication channels. Of the perceived barriers that hinder a smooth municipal-citizen communication, community members' inability to attend meetings was identified as the most common barrier. 7 or 47 % of the respondents identified this as a major barrier. Other factors identified as hindrance include; community members' lack of understanding of IDP programme (2 or 13%), lack of trust (1 or 6.6 %), Communication

breakdown between Ward committee members and civic structure members (1 or 6.6 %), municipality focusing on communities' needs during the electioneering period only (1 or 6.6 %), community members' lack of understanding of the municipality operation processes (1 or 6.6 %), municipality's inability to follow up on community members inputs (1 or 6.6 %) and limited resources (1 or 6.6 %). Some respondents had this to say regarding the communication barriers:

*The common barrier is that when the municipality invites community leaders to attend the imbizo meetings they do not attend those meetings in numbers however the municipality takes resolutions made by the fewer community leaders who attended the meeting.*

Male respondent

*The barrier is that the community members do not believe the feedback provided by the civic structure members.*

Female respondents

*The barrier is that the community members are not well informed about the IDP programme, therefore community members need to be educated about the IDP programmes and also how it operates.*

Female respondent

*The municipality communicates with the communities when the elections are around the corner, the municipality will then send the municipality officials to actively participate to the communities.*

Male respondent

### 4.2.7. Perceived Implications of communication barriers

Table 4.7. Perceived Implications of communication barriers

| Implications of community barriers | Females (n=07) | Males (n=08) | Total (n=15) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Service delivery protests | ●●●●● | ●●●●●● ● | 12 |
| 2. Communities lose trust in the municipality's ability to deliver services | ●●●● | | 4 |
| 3. Municipality will fail to meet its service delivery obligations | | ● | 1 |

Table 4.7 reveals that service delivery protests and communities' lost trust in the ability of the municipality to delivery services were perceived to be the major implications of communication barriers between the municipality and communities. The table shows that 12 (80 %) of the respondents perceived service delivery protests as the main consequence of communication barriers between the municipality and communities. 4 (26%) of the respondents identified lost trust in the municipality to provide services as another consequence of poor communication between the municipality and community members. The following are the views of two respondents on the subject:

> *The community members lose patients and start involving themselves in the community protests which result in destroying the properties and disrupt the public services.*
>
> Male respondent

> *The implication will be the community protests because people believes that the municipality deliver services if there protests in the area.*
>
> Female respondent

*The implication is that the information does not reach to the people in time, this causes people to lose faith on the municipality thinking that the municipality is not working for their communities whereas the municipality is working just that the ways of communicating the current status of the service delivery programmes are not efficient and effective.*

<div align="right">Female respondent</div>

*We have dissatisfied community, community upraising, community who don't have trust in their municipality with communities going as far as boycotting IDP process because they believe they are just talk shows because they don't yield any results and people end up not participating in the lives and affairs of the municipality.*

<div align="right">Male respondent</div>

## 4.2.8. The relationship between Thulamela Municipality's communication platforms and service delivery protests

Table 4.8. The relationship between Thulamela Municipality's communication platforms and service delivery protests

| Perceived relationship between service delivery and community protests | Females (n=07) | Males (n=08) | Total **(n=15)** |
|---|---|---|---|
| There is a relationship between the communication platforms and service delivery protests | ●●●●●● | ●●●● | 10 |
| No relationship exists between the communication platforms and service delivery protests | ● | ●●●● | 5 |

Table 4.8 reveals that respondents had differing views with regards to whether a relationship existed between the Thulamela Local Municipality's communication

platforms and community service delivery protests. The results show that majority of respondents (10, or 67 %) believed that there was a link between the way the Thulamela Municipality communicated its service delivery programmes and service delivery protests in the area. However, the results also reveal that 5 (33 %) of the respondents believed that there was no relationship existed between the municipality's communication channels and service delivery protests by community members. The following are the opposite views expressed by some respondents:

> *Yes, there is a relationship because community members lack understanding of the IDP and this is the main stimulant of community protests, but if the municipality takes its time and educate the rural communities about the communication channels used by the municipality this can reduce the number of community protests in the area.*

> Male respondent

> *There is no close relationship because when the municipality invites people to attend the meetings they do not attend in sufficient numbers and also that some community protests are the results of disgruntled community members.*

> Female respondent

> *There is no relationship because the municipality is well organized, and it operates properly, however the problems initiate when the municipality officials provide false information about the municipality in order for them to gain support from the communities.*

> Male respondent

> *There is no relationship, it is just that the municipality can mainly deliver services when it is under pressure, when people protests that's when the municipality deliver services.*

> Female respondent

### 4.2.9. Measures to be put in place to improve Municipality-citizen communication

Table 4.9. Measures to be put in place to improve Municipality-citizen communication

| Measures to be put in place to improve communication | Females (n=07) | Males (n=08) | Total (n=15) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Promotion of activism and active participation by community leaders and ordinary members of communities | ●● | ●● | 4 |
| 2. Provision of communication tools for use by Ward committee members | ● | ● | 2 |
| 3. Synergy between different stakeholders | | ●● | 2 |
| 4. Providing Ward committee members with true and up to date information | ● | ● | 2 |
| 5. Social media (i.e. Twitter and Facebook) | ● | ● | 2 |
| 6. Employment of Community Development Workers | ● | | 1 |
| 7. Social media (i.e. Twitter and Facebook) | | ● | 1 |
| 8. Regular visits to communities by Municipal workers | | ● | 1 |
| 9. Research new communication methods | | ● | 1 |

Respondents have identified several measures they perceived as solutions to improving municipality-citizen communication as outlined in Table 4.9. The measures include promotion of activism and active participation by community leaders and ordinary members of communities (4 or 27 %), Provision of communication tools for use by Ward committee members (2 or 13 %), Synergy between different stakeholders (2 or 13 %) and Providing Ward committee members with true and up to date information (2 or 13 %), employment of more CDWs (1 or 7 %), regular visits to communities by Municipal workers (1 or 7 %), research on new communication (1 or 7 %) methods were identified as measures perceived as possible solutions to improving municipal-citizen communication in Thulamela Local Municipality. The following are some of the excerpts from respondents:

*The municipality should equip the ward committee members with cell phones to improve communication between the municipality and the ward committee members.*

Female respondent

*I think it is to encourage active participation from every sector of the society and also that the municipality should reinforce the channels which are already in the use.*

Female respondent

*The municipality should send the ward Councillor to communicate with the communities and also that the ward Councillor should be trustworthy to community members by providing the true information instead the ward Councillor provide false information trying to be buyers to community members.*

Male respondent

*I think the municipality should also use media and social networks since the majority of youth spend most of their time in social networks such as Facebook and tweeter and the municipality should ensure that the page should always be updated. The municipality officials should also visit the communities regularly providing them with the information.*

Female respondent

### 4.2.10. Respondents' recommendations on how municipality can improve communication channels

Table 4.10. Respondents' recommendations on how municipalities can improve its communication channels

| Respondents' recommendations on how the municipality can improve communication channels | Females (n=07) | Males (n=08) | Total **(n=15)** |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Information dissemination | ●●●● | ●●●●● | 9 |
| 2. Increase involvement of CDWs in cascading information to communities | ●● | ●● | 4 |
| 3. Capacitation of Ward Committee members on community engagement | | ●● | 2 |

Table 4.10 reveals the suggestions made by respondents made on how the municipality can improve its future communication channels. The table shows that information dissemination was identified as the popular suggestion with 9 (60 %) listing it as a suggestion. Increasing the participation of CDWs in the municipality's engagements with communities was identified as the second most popular suggestion with 4 (27 %) identifying it as possible suggestion. 2 (13 %) believe that training Ward Committee Members on how to engage with communities could also be used as a possible solution. The following are excerpts from some respondents:

> *The municipality needs to consider using platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to communicate with people*
>
> Female respondent

> *My suggestion is that the municipality must ensure that the information about its programmes reaches as many communities as possible.*
>
> Male respondent

*Community Development Workers are not that visible in our village. My suggestion is that the municipality must ensure that they play a visible role in communities.*

Male respondent

## 4.3. PHASE TWO: PRESENTATION OF QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

The questionnaire was designed based on the objectives of the study and circulated to officials in eight Limpopo municipalities. The survey questionnaire was categorised into the following three categories: A: Respondents' Profile or demographical information, B: Information transmission, and C: Effectiveness on the communication strategy. This section will also reveal the recommendations on how to explore the effectiveness of the municipal-citizen communication channels used by the Thulamela Municipality to inform communities about its service delivery programmes. Results from all sections of the questionnaire are also compared to existing empirical evidence to assess consistency.

### 4.3.1. Demographical information

This section of the questionnaire intended to determine the background information of the respondents. A sample of 30 respondents were asked to indicate their gender, age, village name, and marital status, Level of education and employment status. This group of respondents was different from the 15 respondents who participated in the qualitative part of the study. The difference was that unlike the sample for the qualitative study which also comprised of government officials and ward committees whereas 30 respondents were sampled comprised of ordinary members of the community of Ha-Dumasi.

Demographical information was therefore useful in determining and comparing patterns amongst different categories of the research participants such as how respondents perceived the effectiveness on the municipality's communication strategy. Essentially,

the questionnaire included respondents' profile to determine their competency to respond to the questionnaires.

Table 4.11. Demographic details   of sample represented (n=30)

|  |  | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|---|
| Village | Dumasi | 30 | 100 |
| Gender | Male | 15 | 50 |
|  | Female | 15 | 50 |
| Age | 15 - 35 years | 11 | 36.7 |
|  | 36 - 60 years | 10 | 33.3 |
|  | Above 60 years | 9 | 30 |
| Marital status | Single | 17 | 56.7 |
|  | Married | 6 | 20 |
|  | Divorced | 2 | 6.7 |
|  | Widowed | 5 | 16.7 |
| Educational level | Primary schooling but did not complete it | 4 | 13.3 |
|  | Junior Secondary but did not complete it | 10 | 33.3 |
|  | Grade 12 | 5 | 16.7 |
|  | Post- matric qualifications | 11 | 36.7 |
| Employment status | Unemployed | 6 | 20 |
|  | Self employed | 5 | 16.7 |
|  | Employed | 10 | 33.3 |
|  | Pensioner | 9 | 30 |
|  | Total | 30 | 100 |

Table above shows that 30 respondents from Dumasi village were interviewed in this study. Out of 30, 15 were males and 15 were females. The majority (37 %) of the respondents were aged between 15 and 35 years old and were single constitutes 57 %. In terms of education, 11(37 %) respondents had post-matric qualifications and fewer 13% had primary but did not complete it. 33 % of respondents are employed, and 30 % are pensioners.

## 4.3.2. Information Transmission

A good communications strategy is essential for any municipality to get important information out to its residents. Understanding what communication channels and tools are available to a municipality, and which are used by community members, is essential for making sure that a town gets word to its entire audience. The way people get their news varies from traditional forms of media, to word of mouth, to social media and other online sources. Municipalities need to be where the people are. In order find out these the following questions were asked.

## 4.3.3. Knowledge about the Municipality's service delivery programme

Respondents were expected to indicate the kind of communication channel that they use to get their news.

Figure 4.1. Communication channel



| | Through Khoro (community meetings) | Media | Municipality newsletter | Civic structures |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Frequency | 20 | 7 | 1 | 2 |
| Percent | 66,7 | 23,3 | 3,3 | 6,7 |
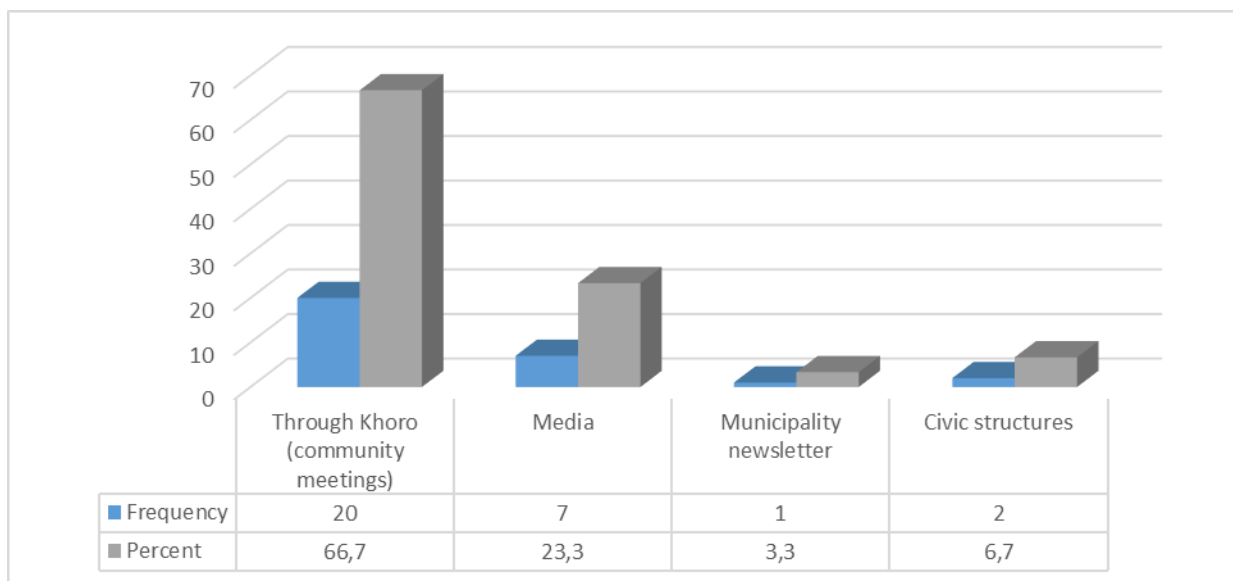
Figure 2 shows that 20 (67 %) respondents get information about municipality service delivery through Khoro (community meetings, 7 (23 %) respondents through media and fewer through Municipality newsletter (3%) and civic structure (7 %).

## 4.3.4. Reception of information about the Municipality's service delivery programmes

It was also important to know how often they receive information about the municipality's service delivery programmes.

Table 4.12.  A frequency in which communities receive information from the municipality

|                          | Frequency | Percent |
|--------------------------|-----------|---------|
| **Once a month**         | 9         | 30.0    |
| **Once every three months** | 20     | 66.7    |
| **Once a year**          | 1         | 3.3     |
| **Total**                | 30        | 100.0   |

Figure 4 2. A frequency in which communities receive information from the municipality
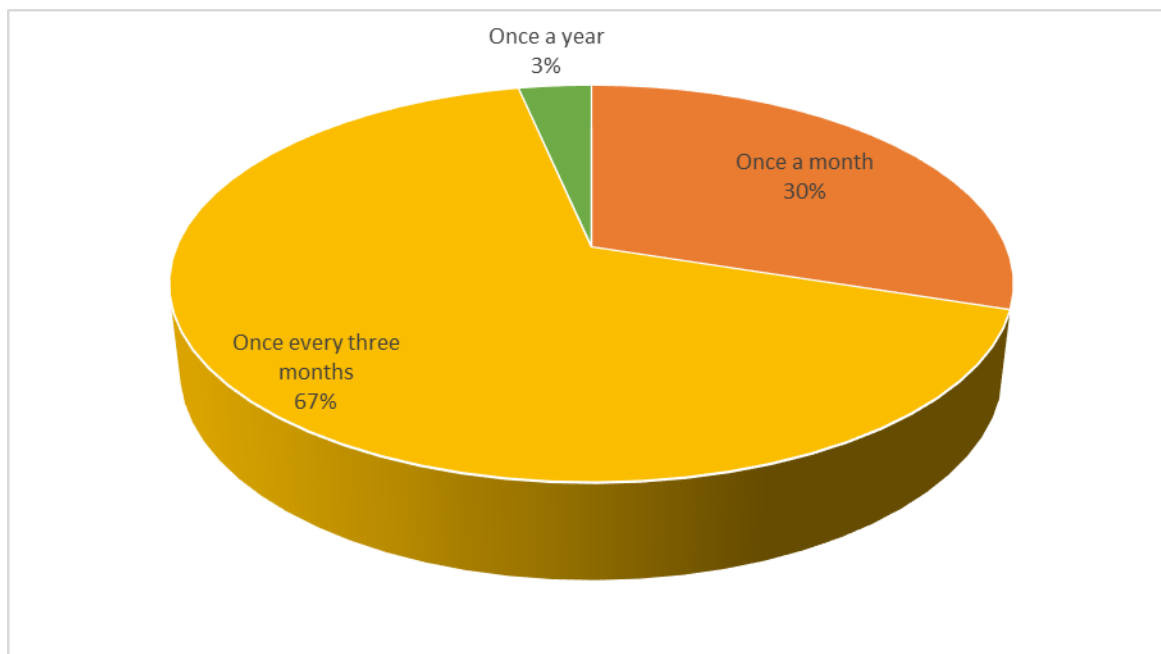


Figure 4.2 shows significance variance in which communities receive information from the municipality. 20 out of 30 constitutes 67 % said they receive information once every

three months whereas 9 out 30 respondents said they receive information once a month and 3% of respondents receive information about municipality's service delivery once a year.

## 4.3.5. Reliability Testing

Using a 5-point Likert scale, respondents were asked to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with the various factors involve the effectiveness of the municipal-citizen communication channels used by the Thulamela Municipality to inform communities about its service delivery programmes.

Twelve (12) possible individual items statements to determine the effectiveness of Thulamela municipality's communication channels as perceived by community members were given to respondents to select those applicable to them. The internal consistencies of perception scales were calculated using Cronbach`s alpha and the average inter-item correlation. These values are presented below in Table 4.13.

Table 4.13. Internal consistency reliability values of scales

| Scale | Cronbach's Alpha | Average Inter-Item Correlation | Number of items |
|---|---|---|---|
| Effectiveness on the municipality's communication strategy | 0.794 | 0.281 | 12 |

The value of Cronbach's Alpha is acceptable for a scale if it is greater than the minimum acceptable value of 0.6. and the average inter-item correlation is greater than the minimum acceptable value of 0.3 (Neuman, 2011:209). This study shows the values of overall Cronbach's Alpha and average inter-item correlation" of 12 items used determine the effectiveness of the Thulamela municipality's communication channels as perceived by community members are 0.794 and 0.281 respectively. It is above the minimum acceptable values, implies that the respondents would possess how the perceived the effectiveness on the municipality's communication strategy.

## 4.3.6. Effectiveness on the municipality's communication strategy

The main aim of this study is to explore the effectiveness of the municipal-citizen communication channels used by the Thulamela Municipality to inform communities about its service delivery programmes. The stacked bar graph below indicates the percentage responses of the respondents per question and the extent of agreement, disagreement and neutrality.

Table 4.14. A summary of response (%) of items on effectiveness on the municipality's communication strategy

| Questions | n | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Thulamela municipality's plan of communicating service delivery programme is easily accessible. | 30 | 0% | 10% | 20% | 27% | 43% | 100% |
| 2. Ward councilor has meeting programme to give feedback to all villages within the ward. | 30 | 33% | 57% | 10% | 0% | 0% | 100% |
| 3. Thulamela municipality has clear programme to communicate decisions taken by council to all the ward committees within its area of jurisdiction. | 30 | 3% | 27% | 50% | 17% | 3% | 100% |
| 4. Integrated Development Plan of Thulamela municipality is accessible by all community members at any given time. | 30 | 3% | 50% | 3% | 34% | 10% | 100% |
| 5. Service delivery protests are the results of lack of service delivery information. | 30 | 83% | 17% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 100% |
| 6. Thulamela municipality Imbizo programme assist many people to access information about service delivery. | 30 | 7% | 57% | 13% | 20% | 3% | 100% |
| 7. Ward Councillor and ward committee give feedback about service delivery each time when there are community meetings. | 30 | 30% | 50% | 7% | 10% | 3% | 100% |

| Statement | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8. Citizens are assisted regularly by the community development workers about service delivery information and how service delivery problems can be resolved by the municipality. | 30 | 0% | 17% | 13% | 37% | 33% | 100% |
| 9. Thulamela municipality has a plan in place to inform civic leadership about services which are due to them. | 30 | 54% | 43% | 3% | 0% | 0% | 100% |
| 10. Traditional leaders (Headman) gives feedback about service delivery meetings they hold with the mayor of Thulamela, on a monthly basis in community meetings. | 30 | 7% | 20% | 17% | 46% | 10% | 100% |
| 11. Resolutions of ward committee meetings are reported to community members immediately after the meeting by the ward committee representative and ward Councillor. | 30 | 3% | 77% | 17% | 3% | 0% | 100% |
| 12. Thulamela municipality's officials and community development workers work closely with the ward Councillor to resolve service delivery problems. | 30 | 43% | 47% | 7% | 0% | 3% | 100% |

Figure 4.3. A summary Response (%) of items on effectiveness on the municipality's communication strategy



| | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q44 | Q5 | Q6 | Q7 | Q8 | Q9 | Q10 | Q11 | Q12 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ■ Strongly agree | 0% | 33% | 3% | 3% | 83% | 7% | 30% | 0% | 53% | 7% | 3% | 43% |
| ■ Agree | 10% | 57% | 27% | 50% | 17% | 57% | 50% | 17% | 43% | 20% | 77% | 47% |
| ■ Neutral | 20% | 10% | 50% | 3% | 0% | 13% | 7% | 13% | 3% | 17% | 17% | 7% |
| ■ Disagree | 27% | 0% | 17% | 33% | 0% | 20% | 10% | 37% | 0% | 47% | 3% | 0% |
| ■ Strongly disagree | 43% | 0% | 3% | 10% | 0% | 3% | 3% | 33% | 0% | 10% | 0% | 3% |
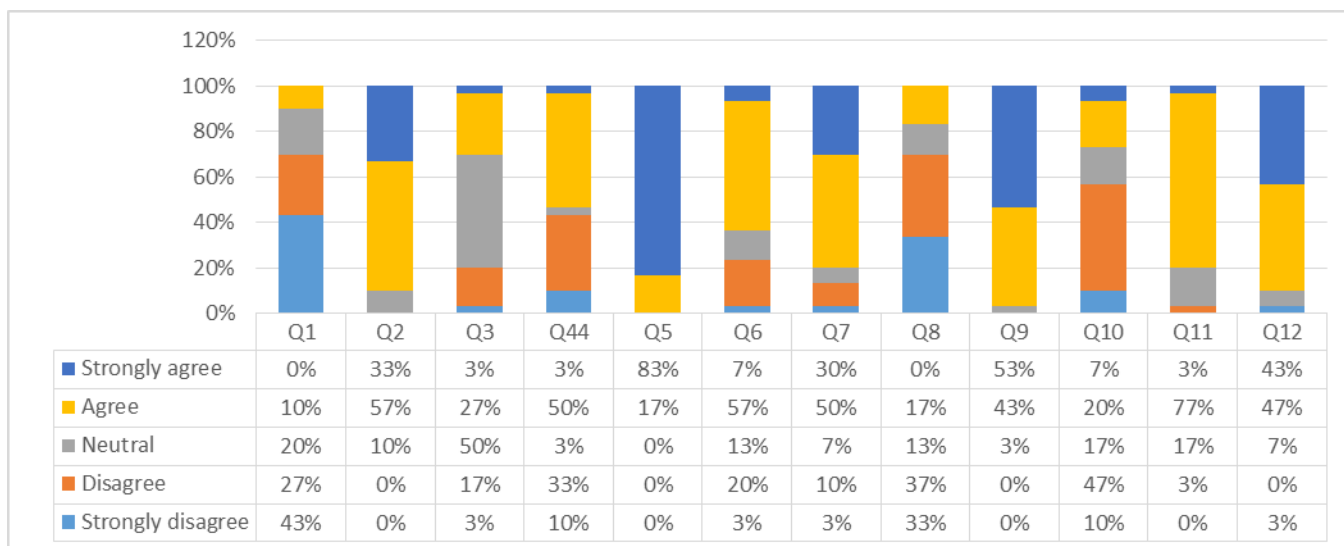
The results show that a majority of 70 % of respondents do not believe that the Thulamela Municipality's communication is easily accessible, with 43 % strongly disagreeing and 27 % disagreeing with the statement respectively. The proportions for the remaining percentages were 0 %, 10 % and 20 % for strongly agree, agree and neutral respectively.

90 % (33 % strongly agree and 57 % agree) conceded that the ward Councillor organizes meetings in which community members are given feedback on the progress of the municipality's service delivery programme. 10 % of the respondents were neutral, while none of the respondents disagreed with the notion.

Table 13 shows that half of the respondents were undecided with regards to the perception that "The Thulamela municipality has clear programme to communicate decisions taken by council to all the ward committees within its area of jurisdiction". The remaining half was spread out as follows: 27 % (agree), 17 % disagree, and 3 % each for strongly agree and strongly disagree options.

The table also shows that half of the respondents are of the view that the municipality's IDP is accessible to all community members at any given time. However, 34 % of the respondents disagreed with the statement. Other respondents' views were as follows; strongly disagree (10 %), strongly agree (3 %) and neutral (3 %).

All respondents agreed that service delivery protests are the consequence of lack of service delivery information with 83 % agreeing strongly with the view while the remaining 17 % just agreeing with the view.

Respondents expressed different views on the perception that "The Thulamela municipality's Imbizo programme assists many people to access information about service delivery". The proportions of these views were; 7 %, 57 %, 13 %, 20 %, 3 % for strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree respectively.

Table 4.13 further reveals that 80 % of the respondents (30 % strongly agree and 50 % agree) agree with the view that ward Councillor and ward committee members provide feedback about service delivery programme whenever there are community meetings. 7 % were undecided, while the remaining 10 % and 3 % disagreed and strongly disagreed with the view respectively.

Respondents expressed different views with regards to the perception that "citizens regularly received assisted from CDWs regarding service delivery information and how their service delivery problems can be resolved by the municipality". More than two thirds of the respondents do not believe that CDWs are helpful when it comes to providing citizens with information regarding service delivery programme. 37 % of the respondents selected the 'disagree' option, while 33 % chose the strongly disagree option. The proportion of the remaining 30 were; 17% (agree) and13% (neutral).

Table 4.13 reveals that 97 % of the respondents (54 % strongly agree and 43 %) are of the view that a plan existed through which the Thulamela municipality informs civic

leadership about its services. The table further shows that the remaining 3 % were neutral or undecided.

The results reveal that 46 % of respondents disagreed with the perception that Traditional leaders (Headmen) give their subjects feedback regarding their monthly service delivery meetings they hold with the mayor of the Thulamela municipality. The proportions of the remaining percentage were; 7% (strongly agree), 20% (agree), 17 % (neutral) and 10 % (strongly disagree).

Table 4.13 reveals that the majority of respondents (77 %) agree with the view that resolutions of ward committee meetings are reported to community members immediately after the meeting by the ward committee representative and Ward Councillor while 3 % strongly agree with the view. However, 17 % of the respondents were undecided while 3 % agreed with the view.

Lastly, the results reveal that 90 % of respondents (43 % strongly agree and 47 % agree) are of the view that the Thulamela municipality's officials and CDWs work need to work closely with the Ward Councillor to resolve service delivery problems. 7 % were undecided while the remaining 3 % strongly disagreed with the view.

### 4.3.7. Testing Normality

The assumption of normality needs to be checked for many statistical procedures, namely parametric tests, because their validity depends on it. The aim of this commentary is to overview checking for normality in statistical analysis using SPSS (Pallant, 2007:65).

Descriptive statistics used in measuring the effectiveness of the municipal-citizen communication channels used by the Thulamela Municipality to inform communities about its service delivery programmes.

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Table 4.15. Summary statistics of mean effectiveness communication channel (n=30)

|  | Statistic | Std. Error |
|---|---|---|
| Mean | 41.61 | 1.09 |
| Median | 42 | |
| Variance | 36.845 | |
| Std. Deviation | 6.07 | |
| Minimum | 28 | |
| Maximum | 52 | |
| Range | 24 | |
| Interquartile Range | 8 | |
| Skewness | -0.442 | 0.421 |
| Kurtosis | 0.01 | 0.821 |

Based on the summary statistics supplied on Table 4.14, less than half of the respondents have perceived positively the effectiveness on the municipality's communication strategy. The following items were summarized, mean, standard deviation, skewness and standard error (Neuman, 2011). Mean M=41.61%, Standard deviation SD=6.07%. The skewness value of -44.2 is similar to its standard error 42.1% and is thus considered significant. Furthermore, the histogram in Figure 4.5 appears to be approximately normally distributed.

Figure 4.4.  Distribution of Effectiveness on the municipality's communication strategy (n=30)



**Histogram**

Mean = 41.61
Std. Dev. = 6.07
N = 31
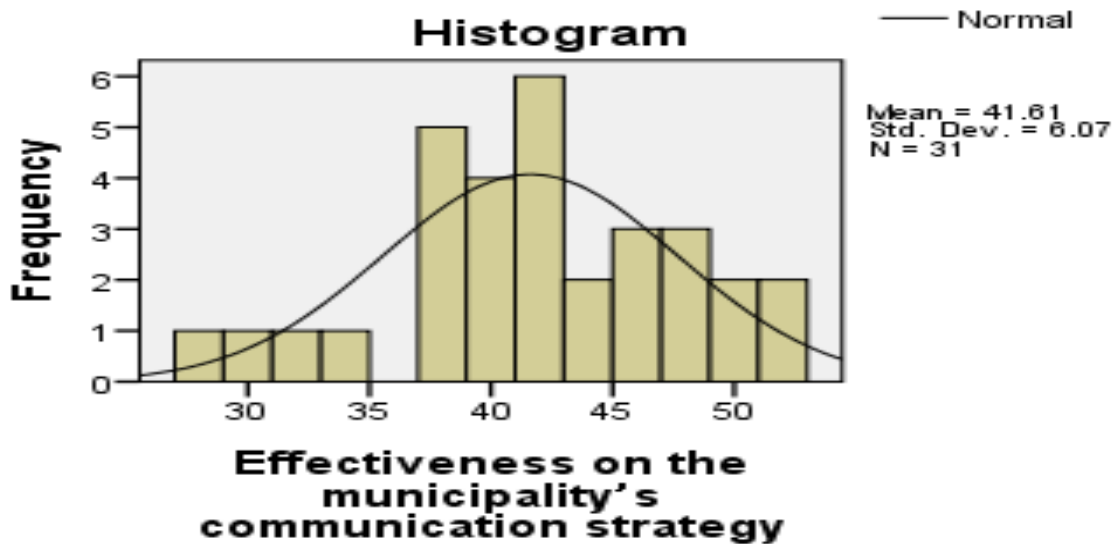
Figure 4.5 shows that it normally distributed. According to the available literature, assessing the normality assumption should be considered for using parametric statistical tests (Pallant, 2007:65). It seems that the most popular test for normality, that is, the K-S test, should no longer be used owing to its low power. It is preferable that normality be assessed both visually and through normality tests, of which the Shapiro-Wilk test, provided by the SPSS software, is highly recommended. The normality assumption also needs to be considered for validation of data presented in the literature as it shows whether correct statistical tests have been used.

## 4.4. Hypothesis testing

The results of the hypotheses tests are discussed in this section. This section begins by discussion independent Sample test (t-test) and goes on stating the statistical.

### 4.4.1. Independent Samples Test

When one chooses to analyse your data using an independent t-test, part of the process involves checking to make sure that the data you want to analyse can actually be analysed using an independent t-test. The independent-samples t-test (or independent t-test, for short) compares the means between two unrelated groups on the same continuous, dependent variable i.e. the measure of perceptions of the effectives on the municipality's community strategy and differed based on gender.

### 4.4.2. Hypothesis:

1. $H_0$: There is no relationship between gender and the respondent's perceptions towards the effectiveness on the community's communication strategy.

$H_1$: There is a relationship between gender and the respondent's perceptions towards the effectiveness on the community's communication strategy.

Table 4.16. Independent Samples Test

| | | | Levene's Test for Equality of Means | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | F | Sig. | T | | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference |
| Equal variances assumed | 1.308 | 0.262 | 0.393 | | 28 | 0.698 | 0.867 | 2.207 |
| Equal variances not assumed | | | 0.393 | | 26.044 | 0.698 | 0.867 | 2.207 |

The assumptions of the t test for independent samples were tested based on visual inspection of the normality of the distribution of mean level of effectiveness on municipality community strategy scores (Pallant, 2007) and the 'Levene's test for equality of variance. There does not appear to be significant deviation from normality,

based on. Furthermore, homogeneous variances are assumed (F = 1.308, p = .262) using the 5% level of significance. Thus, all assumptions are satisfied.

Based on the results of the study, there is a sufficient evidence to say that the respondents perceived the effectiveness on the municipality's communication channels between male and female Thulamela local municipality are different (t (28) = 0.393, p=.698).

Table 4.17. Gender by mean and standard deviation

| Gender | N | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|--------|-----|-------|----------------|
| Male | 15 | 42.33 | 5.15 |
| Female | 15 | 41.47 | 6.823 |

The mean and standard deviation of male respondents are M = 42.33 and SD = 5.15, and for females' M = 41.47 and SD = 6.823, indicating a significant difference in perceived effectiveness on the municipality's communication channels female and male students, using the 5% level of significance. The null hypothesis is not rejected, in favour of hypothesis – there is no evidence of the difference between male and female of the perception the effectiveness on the municipality's communication channels

### 4.4.3. The ANOVA tests

An ANOVA test is a way to find out if survey or experiment results are significant. In other words, they help you to figure out if one needs to reject the null hypothesis or accept the alternate hypothesis. Basically, one is testing groups to see if there is a difference between them.

2. $H_0$: There is no relationship between age and the respondent's perceptions towards the effectiveness on the community's communication strategy.

H₁: There is a relationship between age and the respondent's perceptions towards the effectiveness on the community's communication strategy.

Table 4.18. Summary of responses to items measuring Effectiveness on the municipality's communication strategy

|  | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error | Minimum | Maximum |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15 - 35 years | 11 | 40.45 | 7.258 | 2.188 | 28 | 51 |
| 36 - 60 years | 10 | 41.6 | 4.477 | 1.416 | 38 | 52 |
| Above 60 years | 9 | 44 | 5.679 | 1.893 | 31 | 50 |
| Total | 30 | 41.9 | 5.956 | 1.087 | 28 | 52 |

Table 4.17 shows the mean and standard deviation of age group of the respondents, that is at the age 15-35 years was M = 40.45 and SD = 7.258, aged 36-60 years M = 41.6 and SD = 1.4.16 and aged M = 44 and SD = 5.679.

Table 4.19. Effectiveness on the municipality's communication strategy

| Effectiveness on the municipality's communication strategy | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
| Between Groups | 63.573 | 2 | 31.786 | 0.889 | 0.423 |
| Within Groups | 965.13 | 27 | 35.745 | | |
| Total | 1028.7 | 29 | | | |

Based on the results of the study, there is a sufficient evidence to say that the respondents perceived the effectiveness on the municipality's communication channels between $F_{(2, 27)} = 0.889$, p=.423). The mean and standard deviation of age of the respondents are M = 41.9 and SD = 5.956 for indicating that the perceived effectiveness on the municipality's communication channels of all, i.e. 15-35 years,36-60 years and

Above 60 years are but not sufficiently different to be significant, using the 5% level of significance. The null hypothesis is not rejected, – there is no evidence of the difference between age and perception of effectiveness on the municipality's communication channels.

## 4.5. Integrated results

The main aim of this study was to investigate municipal-citizen communication channels of the Thulamela Local Municipality and its implications on service delivery. Following are some of the study's major findings. Firstly, there is a consensus among respondents from both the qualitative and quantitative phases that *khoro or* community meetings were the main source of information for local communities. These views concur with findings of earlier studies (Siphuma, 2009:116; Mosotho, 2013:62). The results further reveal that respondents from both phases viewed councilors as a link between the municipality and communities. Councilors are believed to play a central role in cascading information from the municipality down to communities. These views are consistent with earlier findings on the subject (Mosotho, 2013:49).

The findings reveal conflicting views on the effectiveness of the Thulamela Municipality's communication channels. The findings of the qualitative phase reveal that majority of respondents are of the view that the platforms currently used were not effective as they did not adequately provide feedback to community members. The findings revealed that although community members believed that measures are put in place to ensure that they are fully represented in IDP meetings and that their inputs are adequately integrated, factors still existed that led to the ineffectiveness of communication channels. Firstly, respondents believed that community members' inability to attend public participation meetings defeated the primary aim of these meetings. Secondly, respondents argued that the municipality was unable to provide adequate and reliable feedback to communities on its service delivery programme. However, these findings contradict those of the quantitative phase of the study. However, these findings contradicted by those of the quantitative phase of this study.

The SPSS findings reveal that although majority of respondents (70 %) indicated that the municipality's communication strategies are not easily accessible to the public, they still viewed them as effective.

The findings of the SPSS reveal that majority of respondents (97 %) indicated that a plan existed through which Thulamela municipality informs civic leadership about its services. The findings show that both the ward Councillor and ward committee members often meet with community members in order to provide feedback on the progress of the municipality's service delivery programme. These findings are consistent with earlier findings (SALGA, 2006; undated and Mchunu, 2012:60). According to the *Handbook for Municipal Councilors*, Municipality councils are supposed to establish structures aimed at enabling community participation and to allow the opportunity for the feedback to the communities on how municipality money is being used.

The importance of feedback provision was highlighted by Mchunu who found that community members are of the view that public protests can be managed if ward councilors are visible and provide constant feedback (2012:60). Providing constant feedback has the potential to empower citizens and further afford them the opportunity to influence the government on issues that are of significance to their lives. However, these findings contradict those of Mngoma (2010:52), who found that ward councillors were accused of not providing feedback to the people. The findings further reveal that respondents are of the general view that the municipality's Imbizo programme played a key role in ensuring that ordinary community members had access to information about its service delivery programmes". These views support earlier findings (Siphuma, 2009:116).

There is however an agreement between respondents from both phases with regards to the role of CDWs. While CDWs are considered a link between the local government and communities (Mokoena and Moeti, 2017:6), findings from both phases reveal that they played a minimal role as sources of information within the study area. For instance, only

1 (7 %) respondent from the qualitative phase identified CDWs as a communication channel (Table 4.2). On the other hand, 70 % of respondents from the 2nd phase disagreed with the statement that "citizens are assisted regularly by the community development workers about service delivery information (Table 4.12). These views support earlier findings by Mokoena and Moeti (2017:8). In determining the views of community members with regards to the role of CDWs in Mpumalanga, Mokoena and Moeti found that most respondents (felt that CDWs were not doing as well as they should. This was attributed to lack of resources and lack of delegated powers. These findings could explain the reason why most respondents (90 %) from the quantitative phase indicated the need for a synergy between municipality's officials, CDWs and the Ward Councillor.

Furthermore, there is an overwhelming agreement by respondents from both phases that ineffective and uncoordinated municipal-citizen communication channels leads to an increase in the number service delivery protests. These views are in congruent with earlier findings on the subject (Botha, 2011:25; Mchunu; 2012:15; SALGA, 2015, undated). The relationship between ineffective communication channels and service delivery protests was highlighted by Alexander (2010:35) who argue that service delivery protest is often the results of poor communication between local governments and local communities.

Lastly, respondents from both phases have suggested ways which they perceive were likely to enhance municipal-citizen communication channels. Majority of respondents from the qualitative phase are of the view that increasing information dissemination by the municipality to communities was likely to improve how the municipality interacted with its constituencies.  There is a consensus from respondents from both phases on the role of CDWs. Respondents from both phases have indicated that the CDWs needed to become more involved in their engagements with local communities. These suggestions are consistent with earlier findings (SALGA, 2006, undated and Mokoena and Moeti, 2017:3).

**4.6. Summary**

This chapter presented and analysed data obtained from both the qualitative and quantitative phases of this study. This chapter shows some direction towards the findings of the study that would determine whether the research objectives were achieved or not. Some of the major aspects that the major findings are; firstly, Councilors have been identified as the main sources of information used by the municipality to relay cascade information regarding its service delivery programme to communities. Secondly, the communication channels used by Thulamela Municipality to convey messages to communities were perceived to be ineffective by community members. Thirdly, services delivery protests are the consequence of ineffective communication channels between Thulamela Municipality and its citizenry. Fourthly, community members further believe that the municipality does not consider community members' inputs while developing its annual IDP.

# CHAPTER 5

# CONCLUSION

## 5.1. Introduction

The previous chapter provided the presentation and analysis of both the qualitative and quantitative data collected through semi-structured interviews and questionnaire respectively. This chapter presents a summary of the study's major findings, offers recommendations, and suggests directions for future research on municipal-citizen communication, as well as the study's limitations and a conclusion.

## 5.2. Summary of Findings

**Objective 1: To determine the effectiveness of the Thulamela Municipality's communication channels as perceived by community members.**

The findings of both the qualitative and quantitative phases of this study revealed that although community members believed that measures in place to ensure that they are fully represented in IDP meetings and that their inputs are adequately integrated, they still viewed the municipality's communication channels as ineffective. These findings support those of Vivier *et al.*, (2014:14). This perception is attributed to several factors. Firstly, respondents believed that community members' inability to attend public participation meetings defeated the primary aim of these meetings. Secondly, respondents from the qualitative phase argued that the municipality was unable to provide adequate and reliable feedback to communities on its service delivery programme. The findings further revealed that community members seldom received feedback from the municipality. However, these findings contradict those of the quantitative phase which revealed that the ward councillor and ward committee members often provided regular feedback on the progress of the municipality's service delivery programme. These views are in congruent with earlier findings on the subject

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(Dau, 2010:57; Mchunu; 2012; SALGA, 2015, undated). Thirdly, the findings further reveal that community members did not believe that CDWs were helpful when it comes to providing citizens with information regarding service delivery programme. These findings were consistent with those of Mokoena and Moeti (2017:3). The findings further reveal that respondents perceived service delivery protests as the consequence of ineffective municipal-citizen communication channels. This is consistent with findings by Akinboade, Mokwena, and Kinfack (2013:87).

**Objective 2: To explore what community members perceive as the most suitable municipal-citizen communication channels for Thulamela Municipality**

The rationale for the inclusion of this objective was to gain a deeper insight on what respondents perceived as an ideal municipal-citizen communication channels. The Thematic Content Analysis show the qualitative findings on what respondents perceived as ideal municipal-citizen communication channels.  Firstly, respondents indicated that they would want to see the creation of a platform through which communities would be able to receive timeous and honest feedback from Ward Committee members. They are of the view that a creation of such a platform will ensure that communities will receive constant feedback on issues such as progress on the implementation of the IDP. These views are consistent with those of Mbelengwa (2016:69) who found that municipalities should provide on-going feedback on progress made on the IDP programmes. Secondly, the findings of qualitative study indicate that respondents would want to see the implementation of communication channels that promote activism and active participation of all relevant stakeholders. These views are consistent with earlier studies (Sebei, 2014:176; SALGA, 2013: undated). On the other hand, findings of the quantitative phase of this study revealed that 90 % of the respondents (Table 13) would like to see communication channels where there is synergy between all stakeholders. It is their view that a working relationship where municipality officials, CDWs and ward Councillor complete each other is likely to improve how the municipal communicated with its citizens. These views are congruent with earlier findings by Kurokawa (2007:11),

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who found that a fundamental tool for communication was sharing of information in a mutual and understandable manner.

**Objective 3: To suggest ways the Thulamela Municipality can adopt to enhance the way they communicate their service delivery strategies to local communities.**

In an effort to better understand what respondents would want the municipality to do to improve communication, a Thematic Content Analysis was carried out. The findings of the qualitative phase of the study (Table 4.10) reveal suggestions made by respondents on how the municipality can improve its future communication channels with its citizens. The table shows that majority of the respondents (60 %) are of the view dissemination of information through the use of different platforms (that is, Social network) as a possible solution. These findings are consistent with earlier studies (Mosotho, 2013:51; Vivier *et al.*, 2014:15). The issue of information dissemination is one of the main causes of conflicts between local governments and communities. For instance, Vivier et al (2014:15) found that civil society identified insufficient information exchange between municipalities and its citizens as a 'key failing'.  Other respondents (27 %) believe that the municipality need to increase the participation of CDWs in its engagements with communities. These are consistent with observations by SALGA (2006, undated). On the other hand, about 2 (13%) believe that capacitating ward committee Members on how to engage with communities was likely to enhance how the municipality communicated with its citizens.

**5.3. Recommendations of the study**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are hereby submitted for considerations by the municipality:

i.      **Provision of constant feedback**

The findings of this study revealed that community members believe the municipality was unable to provide constant and reliable feedback on its programmes. It is therefore recommended that the municipality put measures in place that will allow for the provision of constant and reliable feedback to their constituencies on the implementation of its programmes in a timeous and effective manner to ensure that community members stay informed.

ii.     **Capacitation of Community Development Workers**

The findings have revealed that Community Development Workers' are unable to effectively engage with community members on the programmes of the municipality. This was identified as one of the main reasons why the municipality's current communication channels are perceived as ineffective. It is therefore recommended that the municipality put measures in place to capacitate CDWs on their role as agents that communicate government programmes to the communities.

iii.    **Civic education**

The study further recommends that local municipalities should consider introducing civic education programmes. The main purpose of these programmes would be in two folds. Firstly, the programmes would help conscientize members of communities at grassroots level about the significance of participating in government related issues. Secondly, these programmes would also help people to understand how local governments operate. It is envisaged that better understanding of government's programmes by the

people on the ground is likely to enhance the municipality's relationship with its citizenry. The consequence of such a relationship will be a reduction in the number of service delivery protests.

### iv.      Information dissemination

The research findings reveal that information dissemination was identified as one of the main suggestions made by respondents. Such a suggestion might mean that community members consider the municipality's current channels as ineffective in communicating messages to communities. It is therefore recommended that the Thulamela Municipality seriously consider reviewing the effectiveness of its current communication channels as tools used to cascade information down to its citizens. The results of such a review might lead to the formulation and implementation of context-specific communication strategies which will timeously and effectively communicate the municipality's programmes to communities.

### 5.4. Direction for future Research

The findings have created a number of opportunities for future research, both in terms of research and policy development. Firstly, the findings of the current study revealed that residents of Dumasi village perceived the Thulamela Municipality's current communication as ineffective in cascading information down to grassroots communities. However, the fact that the study was limited to one village means its findings cannot be generalized. Therefore, much work remains to be done to understand whether the views of the Dumasi residents are congruent with those from other villages located within the Thulamela local municipalities. There is therefore a need to carry out a robust and detailed analysis of the views of community members from different villages of Thulamela Municipality. The findings of such a study might assist the municipality and other rural-based municipalities in the formulation and implementation of future municipal-citizen communication channels.

The findings of this study further revealed that ineffective municipal-citizen communication channels were the main cause of service delivery protests. These findings further created an opportunity for future studies to be carried out to validate the current findings. Such studies might also be directed at exploring effective ways of engaging with community members to avoid community protest which often turn violent. The findings of the current study also document what respondents perceive to be ideal communication channels as well as suggestions on how to improve these channels.  It is necessary to understand how technological advancement (social media) can be used to complement the conventional communication methods (Imbizos) in cascading information about government programmes to the people in grassroots communities. Such understanding could eventually lead to the development and implementation of municipal-citizen communication channels that encourage open and robust engagement between local governments and their citizenry. These findings further necessitate the carrying out of robust analysis on these suggestions to determine their applicability and possible implications on service delivery. The findings of such a study might help local municipalities in the formulation of context-specific communication channels.

## 5.5. Conclusion

This study sought out to explore the municipal-citizen communication channels of the Thulamela local municipality and their implications on service delivery. The following objectives guided the direction of this study; to determine the effectiveness of the Thulamela Municipality's communication channels as perceived by community members; to investigate the most suitable platforms to improve municipal-citizen communication in the Thulamela Municipality as perceived by community members and to suggest ways the Thulamela Municipality can adopt to enhance the way they communicate their service delivery strategies to local communities. The study was carried out in Dumasi village of Thulamela Municipality in Limpopo Province, South Africa. Data for this study was collected over a period of four months, covering the

period between August and November 2017. A mixed method, sequential approach was adopted. A total of forty-five respondents participated in the study. The Data for the qualitative phase aid was collected with the aid of an interview guide was a questionnaire was used to collect data for the quantitative phase of the study.

The findings revealed that although community members believed that measures are put in place to ensure that they are fully represented in IDP meetings and that their inputs are adequately integrated, factors still existed that led to the ineffectiveness of communication channels. Firstly, respondents believed that community members' inability to attend public participation meetings defeated the primary aim of these meetings. Secondly, respondents argued that the municipality was unable to provide adequate and reliable feedback to communities on its service delivery programme. The findings further revealed that community members seldom received feedback from the municipality. Findings of the SPSS reveal that majority of respondents indicated that a plan existed through which Thulamela municipality informs civic leadership about its services. The findings show that both the Ward Councillor and Ward Committee members often meet with community members in order to provide feedback on the progress of the municipality's service delivery programme. The findings of quantitative further revealed that Imbizo programme played a key role in ensuring that ordinary community members had access to information about its service delivery programmes. The findings from both phases of the study revealed that CDWs are perceived as ineffective as government agents whose role is to cascade information about municipality's programmes to the communities.

The study, therefore, concludes that effective municipal-effective communication channels are mostly reliant on community members' active participation as well as the municipality's ability to provide constant and reliable feedback to its constituencies. For continuous improvement on its communication with its constituencies, the Thulamela Local Municipality must consider the findings and recommendation of this study.

## 5.6. Limitations of the study

Firstly, the study area of this study was confined to only one village. Secondly, data used for analysis was collected from 45 units of analysis. As a result, the findings of this study cannot be generalized to a larger population. Interviews were conducted in isiTshivenda and later translated into English. It is possible that the respondents' responses might have been diluted during the process.

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## 7. Appendices

### 7.1. Appendix 1:    Interview Guide

1. How would you describe the communication channels used by Thulamela Municipality to communicate its service delivery programmes to local communities?

2. In your view, do you think the community input made during the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) forums are adequately integrated into the municipality's IDP?

3. Do you think careful considerations are put in place in the convening of IDP forums to ensure facilitation of meaningful contributions from communities to the planning processes?

4. What are your views on the effectiveness of platforms used by the municipality to provide feedback and/or updates to communities on the implementation of its services delivery programmes outlined in the IDP?

5. What do you think are the most common barriers that the municipality generally encounters in the implementation of its communication platforms?

6. What do you think are the implications of the barriers you identified on service delivery within the municipality?

7. Do you think there is a relationship between how the municipality communicates its service delivery programmes and the number of community service delivery protests in the area? Please elaborate.

8. What would you perceive as the most suitable municipal-citizen communication channels for Thulamela Municipality?

9. Suggest strategies that Thulamela Local municipality can use to improve its future communication channels.

**7.2. Appendix 2:  Questionnaire**

**Instructions**

**Use a pencil provided to you to answer the questions. Please answer the questions by making a cross (X) next to a number that is allocated next to the question/item/statement applicable to you**

1.  **Gender**       **Male**     ☐     **Female**     ☐

2.  **Age category**

| 15 – 35 yrs | 1 |
|---|---|
| 36 – 60 yrs | 2 |
| Above 60 yrs | 3 |

| EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF HOUSEHOLD HEAD | |
|---|---|
| 1. Never went to school | |
| 2. Primary schooling but did not complete it | |
| 3. Completed primary schooling | |
| 4. Junior Secondary but did not complete it | |
| 5. Grade 12 | |
| 6. Post-matric qualifications | |

**INFORMATION TRANSMISSION**

1.  **How do you normally get to know about the Municipality's service delivery programme?**

| 2. Through khoro (community meetings) | |
|---|---|
| 3. Media | |
| 4. Municipality newsletters | |

| 5. Community Development Workers (CDWs) | |
|---|---|
| 6. Local Councilor | |
| 7. Civic Structures | |

**2. How often do you receive information about the Municipality's service delivery programmes?**

| 1. Never | |
|---|---|
| 2. Once a week | |
| 3. Once a month | |
| 4. Once every three months | |
| 5. Once a year | |

**3. Put a cross in the box with the number that corresponds to the correct answer.**

1. SD = Strongly Disagree 2. D = Disagree 3. N = Neutral 4. A = Agree 5. SA = Strongly Agree

| Statements | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Thulamela municipality's plan of communicating service delivery programme is easily accessible. | | | | | |
| 2. Ward councillor has meeting programme to give feedback to all villages within the ward. | | | | | |
| 3. Thulamela municipality has clear programme to communicate decisions taken by council to the all ward committees within its area of jurisdiction. | | | | | |
| 4. Integrated development plan of Thulamela municipality is accessible by all community members at any given time. | | | | | |
| 5. Service delivery protests are results of lack of service delivery information. | | | | | |
| 6. Thulamela municipality imbizo programme assist many people to access information about service delivery. | | | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7. Ward councillor and ward committee give feedback about service delivery each time when there are community meetings. | | | | |
| 8. Citizens are assisted regularly by the community development worker about service delivery information and how service delivery problems can be resolved by the municipality. | | | | |
| 9. Thulamela municipality has a plan in place to inform civic leaderships about services which are due to them. | | | | |
| 10. Traditional leaders (Headman)gives feedback about service delivery meetings they hold with the mayor of Thulamela on a monthly basis in "Khoro" | | | | |
| 11. Resolutions of ward committee meetings are reported to members of the community immediately after the meeting by the ward committee representative and ward councillor. | | | | |
| 12. Officials of Thulamela municipality and community development worker work closely with ward councillor to resolve service delivery problems. | | | | |

## 7.3.   Appendix 3: Faculty approval letter

**University of Limpopo**
**Faculty of Management and Law**
**OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DEAN**
Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa
Tel:(015) 268 2558, Fax: (015) 268 2873, Email: johannes.tsheola@ul.ac.za

30 August 2017

NW.Mutoti (201533147)
**TURFLOOP GRADUATE SCHOOL OF LEADERSHIP**
**MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

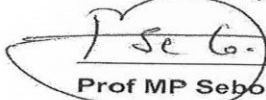Dear Mr NW Mutoti

### FACULTY APPROVAL OF PROPOSAL

I have pleasure in informing you that your Masters proposal served at the Faculty Higher Degrees Committee meeting on **23 August 2017** and your title was approved as follows:

"Exploring Municipal –Citizen Communication Channels of the Thulamela Local Municipality of the Limpopo Province and their Implications on Service Delivery".

Note the following: The study

| Ethical Clearance | Tick One |
|---|---|
| Requires no ethical clearance Proceed with the study | |
| Requires ethical clearance (Human) (TREC) (apply online) Proceed with the study only after receipt of ethical clearance certificate | √ |
| Requires ethical clearance (Animal) (AREC) Proceed with the study only after receipt of ethical clearance certificate | |

Yours faithfully

01/09/2017

**Prof MP Sebola**
**Chairperson: Faculty Higher Degrees Committee**

CC: Dr F Ganda, Supervisor, Dr NE Zwane, Acting Programme Manager and Prof MX Lethoko, Acting Director of School

*Finding solutions for Africa*

## 7.4.  Appendix 4: Ethical Clearance Certificate

**University of Limpopo**
Department of Research Administration and Development
Private Bag X1106, Sovenga, 0727, South Africa
Tel: (015) 268 4029, Fax: (015) 268 2306, Email:Abdul.Maluleke@ul.ac.za

**TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE**

**MEETING:**          02 November 2017

**PROJECT NUMBER:**   TREC/408/2017: PG

**PROJECT:**

**Title:**            Exploring municipal-citizen communication channels of the Thulamela
                      Local Municipality of the Limpopo Province and their implications on
                      service delivery

**Researcher:**       NW Mutoti
**Supervisor:**       Dr F Ganda
**Co-Supervisor:**    N/A
**School:**           Turfloop Graduate School of Leadership
**Degree:**           Masters in Public Administration

PROF TAB MASHEGO
CHAIRPERSON: TURFLOOP RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

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

**Note:**
i)   Should any departure be contemplated from the research procedure as approved, the
     researcher(s) must re-submit the protocol to the committee.
ii)  The budget for the research will be considered separately from the protocol.
     PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES.

*Finding solutions for Africa*

**7.5. Appendix 5: Request for a permission to conduct a study**

**University of Limpopo**
**Turfloop Graduate School of Leadership**
**P O Box 756, Fauna Park, 0787**
**Tel: (015) 268 4179, Email: nthabiseng.letsebe@ul.ac.za**

## MEMORANDUM

**To** : To Whom It May Concern

**From** : Dr. F Ganda
Supervisor

**Date** : 03 October 2017

**Subject** : Request for Permission to Conduct Research Study

Dear Sir/Madam,

This is to confirm that student Mutoti NW (201533147) is an MPA registered student for 2017 and the title of his study is "Exploring Municipal-Citizens Communication Channels of the Thulamela Municipality of the Limpopo Province and their Implications on Service Delivery" and he would like to conduct a research study in your municipality and request permission to do so.

Thank you,

Regards

Dr. F Ganda
Supervisor

*Finding solutions for Africa*

## 7.6.    Appendix 6: Permission to conduct a study in Thulamela Municipality

CORPORATE DEPARTMENT
THULAMELA MUNICIPALITY
H. R.

0.3 OCT 2017

Private Bg X5066 Thohoyandou 0950
**LIMPOPO PROVINCE**
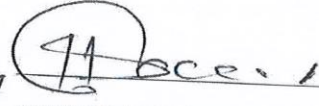
Private Bag X5066
Thohoyandou
0950
Limpopo Province
Tel:  015 962 7500
Fax: 015 962 5328
      015 962 4020

| | |
|---|---|
| Ref | : 7554 |
| Enquiries | : Mhinga T.C |
| Tel | : 015 962 7554 |
| Fax | : 015 962 4020 |
| Email | : mhingatc@thulamela.gov.za |

To Whom it may Concern

| | |
|---|---|
| From | : THULAMELA MUNICIPALITY |
| Date | : 02 OCTOBER 2017 |
| Subject | : REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT |

THULAMELA MUNICIPALITY: MUTOTI NTHAMBELENI

WILSON: ID. 6506085871085

1.   The above matter refers.

2.   Kindly note that your request to conduct research has been granted on condition that you will keep all the information confidential.

3.   Hoping that this will reach your favourable consideration.

SENIOR MANAGER: CORPORATE SERVICES

**No:** 0026712

1

THULAMELA MUNICIPALITY

## 7.7. Letter from the language editor

# Dr Catherine Hutchings
## Freelance Editorial Services

51 Bathurst Road
Kenilworth
7708
Cape Town
Western Cape
South Africa

Telephone/Fax: + 27 21 7618522
Mobile: + 27 82 9702219
E-mail: catherinehutchings@gmail.com

## To whom it may concern.

I hereby confirm that I edited
N.W. Mutoti's
Mini dissertation for
MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Title:
EXPLORING MUNICIPAL-CITIZEN COMMUNICATION CHANNELS OF
THE THULAMELA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY OF THE LIMPOPO PROVINCE,
AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS ON SERVICE DELIVERY

in March 2018.

I wish this student well in their endeavours.

Catherine Hutchings