



The perspectives on the impact of corruption on service delivery:

A case study of a KwaZulu Natal municipality

by

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DECLARATION

This is to confirm that this dissertation is my own work which I have never previously submitted to any other university for any purpose. The references used and cited have been acknowledged.

Signature of candidate..........

On the28.....day of ...February.....2025

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I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has supported me throughout this journey.

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ABSTRACT

KwaZulu-Natal, which is one of South Africa's largest provinces in terms of population density, is home to numerous municipalities which are local government structures that are mandated to ensure basic service delivery to all the citizens in its area of responsibility. However, this province has reportedly faced unique challenges in its ability to ensure equitable and sustainable service delivery. While the municipalities in this region are tasked with improving the quality of life for their residents, the pervasive nature of corruption undermines their efforts. Corruption poses a significant challenge to effective governance and service delivery in many municipalities across South Africa, including iNdumiso Municipality¹ in KwaZulu-Natal. Corruption in local governance has emerged as a significant barrier to effective service delivery by municipalities across South Africa. Acts of corruption do not only redirect essential resources away from critical community needs, but also reinforce inequality and impose the marginalisation of certain groups in the population. Due to the broad nature of corruption as an academic topic, it was deemed important and instructive to narrow down the scope of this investigation to a particular case to ensure that contextual factors would be suitably considered. In this instance, the case on the impact of corruption in service delivery was the iNdumiso Municipality.

Local governments play a vital role in managing the delivery of basic services such as sanitation, water, and housing and form the government tier that is closest to communities (Sekibuule, 2012). Poor governance in municipalities can greatly affect public service delivery, either directly through higher pricing or indirectly through lower quality or frequency of available services. However, the high levels of corruption in local governments are associated with service delivery, therefore it was important to examine irregularities in service delivery to determine how a local community was affected by such malpractices, which unnecessarily impoverish citizens. The choice of iNdumiso as the study location was significant due to recent reports of corruption within this local government structure. These reports raised concerns about the efficiency and effectiveness of public service provision in this area. By focusing on this municipality, the study aimed to gain a deep understanding of the specific challenges faced by residents in accessing quality services and the role of corruption in exacerbating these issues.

¹ This is a pseudonym.

Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, a pseudonym is used to refer to the municipality under study. The research aimed to explore the prevalence, forms, and drivers of corruption within the municipality and analysed how these factors hindered the provision of essential services. Data were collected by means of semi-structured interviews involving 18 participants, including 10 municipal workers and 8 community members. The findings revealed that corruption in the iNdumiso Municipality manifested in several ways, including bribery, nepotism, and embezzlement. These corrupt practices had a direct and detrimental impact on the quality and accessibility of services such as water, sanitation, and infrastructure. Economic pressures, weak institutional frameworks, and cultural norms that tolerate unethical behaviour were identified as the key drivers of corruption. While the study found that some efforts had been made to address corruption, it was highlighted that these initiatives had been largely ineffective due to weak governance and lack of accountability. The research therefore emphasises the need for a more robust and collaborative approach to service delivery through initiatives that involve local government, community members, and civil society. It seems essential to combat corruption and improve service delivery in iNdumiso Municipality, and possibly other municipalities that experience similar challenges.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

- IMF-International Monetary Fund
- NGO-Non Governmental Organisation
- AGSA-Auditor General of South Africa
- MFMA- Municipal Finance Management Act
- PFMA-Municipal Finance Management Act
- MSA-Municipal Systems Act
- PAIA-Promotion of Access to Information Act
- TI-Transparency International
- CPI-Corruption Perception Index

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

Corruption is a global issue whose severity varies greatly between nations, yet its effects are universally destructive, undermining governance, eroding public trust, and distorting resource allocation (Ruhiga, 2009). Defined broadly as the “abuse of public or private position for personal gain” (Transparency International, 2023:1), corruption has a particularly detrimental impact on developing democracies. The term itself originates from the Latin *corruptus*, meaning “to break apart” (Mantzaris and Pillay, 2014a), a fitting description of how corruption fractures the social and institutional fabric of society. In South Africa, corruption within local government has emerged as one of the most persistent threats to effective service delivery. Although municipalities are constitutionally mandated, in terms of Section 152(1) of the Constitution (Republic of South Africa, 1996), to provide basic services in a sustainable manner, many communities still lack access to essentials such as clean water, electricity, sanitation, and infrastructure. This gap between constitutional obligation and lived reality is frequently attributed to systemic corruption, which diverts resources away from service provision, fosters inefficiency, and deepens inequality (Matebese-Notshulwane, 2021; Nengwekhulu, 2009).

The problem is particularly acute in KwaZulu-Natal, where repeated reports by the Auditor-General and civil society organisations have linked procurement irregularities, nepotism, and embezzlement to service delivery failures at the municipal level. iNdumiso Municipality, the focus of this study, has been identified as a site where such challenges are prevalent. Despite policies and anti-corruption measures, allegations of mismanagement and unethical practices persist, raising urgent questions about the extent to which corruption compromises the municipality’s capacity to deliver essential services. This study therefore seeks to investigate the relationship between corruption and the lack of service delivery in iNdumiso Municipality. Specifically, it examines how corruption manifests within the municipality, the mechanisms through which it affects service provision, and the lived experiences of both municipal employees and community members. The study’s main objectives are to explore the nature and forms of corruption that impact service delivery in the municipality. Analyse the drivers that sustain these corrupt practices and assess the direct and indirect effects of corruption on the quality, accessibility, and efficiency of service delivery. The importance of this investigation lies in its potential to inform targeted interventions that address both the causes and consequences of corruption. By grounding

the analysis in local realities, the study aims to contribute to the broader discourse on governance and accountability in South Africa, while providing actionable recommendations that can improve service delivery and strengthen democratic governance. In doing so, the research aspires to benefit not only policymakers and municipal administrators but also the communities whose well-being depends on effective and transparent local government.

1.2 Background of the Study

Corruption in local government is not a new phenomenon in South Africa; rather, it is a persistent challenge that has evolved alongside the country's political and administrative systems. Since the advent of democracy in 1994, municipalities have been entrusted with the critical role of delivering basic services such as water, sanitation, housing, and electricity to communities in an equitable and sustainable manner. However, over the past two decades, repeated reports by the Auditor-General, the Public Protector, and civil society organisations have revealed widespread maladministration, procurement irregularities, and misappropriation of public funds at municipal level (Auditor-General South Africa, 2022; Corruption Watch, 2023).

Historical audit trends underscore the severity of the problem. In the 2010/2011 financial year, only 13 out of 283 municipalities in South Africa achieved a clean audit (Deloitte and Touche, 2012). By the 2021/2022 cycle, KwaZulu-Natal municipalities collectively recorded 45 material irregularities amounting to financial losses exceeding R553 million (Auditor-General South Africa, 2022). These irregularities often linked to inflated tenders, ghost projects, and politically motivated appointments have contributed directly to service delivery failures. The consequences are visible in ongoing service delivery protests: according to the Municipal IQ Hotspots Monitor, South Africa experienced over 900 service delivery protests between 2016 and 2021, with KwaZulu-Natal ranking among the top provinces for such incidents.

Empirical research has established clear connections between corruption and poor municipal performance. For example, Kanyane (2014) found that procurement-related corruption often leads to cost overruns and substandard infrastructure, while Matebese-Notshulwane (2021) emphasised how nepotistic appointments undermine administrative capacity. Yet, much of the existing literature focuses on either the general drivers of corruption or high-level national statistics, without capturing the specific local dynamics that shape the corruption service delivery nexus in individual municipalities. This gap is particularly evident in the case of iNdumiso Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal. While the municipality is mandated to serve more than 240,000 residents, it has faced recurring allegations of tender manipulation, unauthorised expenditure, and failure to deliver

on essential infrastructure projects. Local media and oversight reports indicate that despite policy frameworks such as the Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA) and municipal anti-fraud strategies, corruption remains entrenched, often going unpunished due to weak enforcement mechanisms and political interference.

The exact nature of the problem in iNdumiso Municipality is therefore twofold:

Operational –Corruption is diverting resources, undermining capacity, and lowering the quality of service provision.

Systemic – Weak institutional controls and a culture of impunity allow corrupt practices to persist.

By focusing on this specific municipality, the present study seeks to provide a contextualized, evidence-based understanding of how corruption directly impacts service delivery outcomes. In doing so, it responds to the lack of in-depth, localised research in this area and aims to generate findings that can inform both municipal reform and broader anti-corruption strategies in South Africa.

1.3 Research Problem

Corruption in the public service occurs when officials and employees act dishonestly in the execution of their professional duties for private and personal gain (Mafunisa and Sebola, 2014).The concept of service delivery is

arguably linked to government's intent to satisfy its clients through provision of good and quality service (Sebola, 2012). Service delivery in the South African context is a constitutional obligation and should be fulfilled without bias. Constitutionally, service provision is supposed to be executed in a manner that is equitable, fair, and without discrimination. However, service delivery, although a constitutional requirement in South Africa, does not prevail as smoothly as envisioned by the government in power and, as a result, there have been a recorded number of public service delivery protests in the country.

During the 2010/2011 financial year, only thirteen (13) of the two hundred and eighty-three (283) municipalities in South Africa, including district municipalities and metropolitan municipalities, achieved a clean audit (Deloitte and Touche, 2012). In recent years, iNdumiso Municipality has faced persistent governance challenges characterised by procurement irregularities, financial mismanagement, and incomplete infrastructure projects. The Auditor-General South Africa's 2021/2022 municipal audit identified R48 million in irregular expenditure, much of it related to non-compliance with procurement regulations (Auditor-General South Africa, 2022). High-profile cases, such as the incomplete R12 million Ward 7 road upgrade and the stalled 2020 housing project, illustrate how financial mismanagement directly results in service delivery failures (Ngcobo, Daily News, 2022; Mhlongo, IOL, 2023).

These problems have tangible consequences: residents are left without adequate road access, housing remains incomplete, and service delivery protests have become more frequent. Although national and provincial studies recognise corruption as a barrier to service delivery, there is limited research that examines how this dynamic unfolds in iNdumiso Municipality specifically. This gap in context-specific evidence hinders the development of targeted interventions that address the municipality's unique governance weaknesses. Service delivery in South Africa remains a big challenge for municipalities who are now burdened by a lack of infrastructure, resources, and maintenance initiatives and most are unable to provide communities with quality service delivery in fast turnaround time. Issues such as poor interpretation of policies, corruption, maladministration of resources, lack of coordination and aligned programmes, as well as lack of skills and monitoring by officials have to be dealt with at length in order to curb the problems of service delivery (Buthelezi and Dollery, 2004).

As an academic topic, corruption is very wide, and therefore it was important to narrow down the scope of this scholarly investigation to a particular case in order to ensure that contextual factors would be suitably and comprehensively considered. In this instance, the case that was identified to investigate the impact of corruption on service delivery was the iNdumiso

Municipality.

1.4 Significance of the Study

Local governments play a vital role in managing the delivery of basic services such as sanitation, water, waste disposal, and housing and is the government tier that is closest to communities (Sekibuule, 2012). Poor governance greatly affects public service delivery, both directly through higher pricing and indirectly through low quality and sub-standard services. High levels of corruption in local governments compromise service delivery, and therefore it was important to examine these irregularities against the service delivery requirements set by the government to determine how society would be affected by such malpractices. The intention of this study was not to undermine the work already done to advance service delivery in the iNdumiso municipality, but to caution people and municipal managers about actions that will undermine the significance of their efforts.

Previous research focused on the factors that drive corruption (Koma, 2010; Madumo, 2015; Sebola, 2017). They investigated who were involved, how much was lost, which political parties were involved, and what could be done, but understanding how severe the impact of corruption is on service delivery by local municipalities was neglected, and this is a gap that this study aimed to fill. The study was conceptualised on the premise that corruption in local municipalities is this country's Enemy Number One, as it robs not only law-abiding tax payers, but more specifically the poor of essential services (Brockmyer, 2021).

1.4.1 Contribution to academic knowledge

By investigating the relationship between corruption and service delivery in iNdumiso Municipality through a qualitative case study approach, this research uses semi-structured interviews with both municipal employees and community members to gather first-hand perspectives on the problem. Thematic analysis is employed to identify patterns in how corruption manifests and how these practices influence the quality, accessibility, and timeliness of services. In alignment with the study's objectives, this methodological approach enables an in-depth, context-specific understanding of the mechanisms linking corruption to service delivery outcomes. The findings are expected to contribute to the academic discourse on governance and public administration by providing empirical evidence from a localised South African context an area where such detailed, qualitative studies remain limited.

1.4.2 Policy implications

The findings of this study will provide valuable insights for policymakers at both local and provincial levels. By identifying the specific ways in which corruption undermines service delivery, the research can inform the development of targeted policies and interventions aimed at enhancing transparency, accountability, and governance practices in iNdumiso Municipality, as well as those who might experience similar challenges.

1.4.3 Community empowerment

Engaging with community members throughout the research process not only assisted in eliciting their perspectives on corruption, but also empowered them by highlighting their experiences and concerns. The findings and recommendations offered by this study may amplify the voices of residents, fostering a greater awareness of their rights and the importance of holding local authorities accountable for service delivery.

1.4.4 Framework for future research

This study may serve as a foundation for future research on governance and corruption in other municipalities in the KwaZulu-Natal province and beyond. By establishing a methodological framework and highlighting key issues, it may inform further investigations into related topics and encourage comparative studies across different regions.

1.4.5 Improving service delivery

Ultimately, the significance of this research lies in its potential to lead to improved service delivery outcomes in iNdumiso Municipality. By providing actionable recommendations based on empirical evidence, the study will support efforts to enhance the quality of public services, thereby contributing to the overall well-being and development of the targeted community, and possibly others as well.

1.5 Location of the Study

The targeted municipality is located in the northern region of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. It is a local municipality within the Zululand District Municipality and comprises both rural and urban settlements.

Selecting iNdumiso Municipality as the study location was informed by recent reports of corruption and governance failures within its local government structures. For instance, the Auditor-General South Africa's 2021/2022 municipal audit outcomes identified irregular expenditure exceeding R48 million in iNdumiso, largely due to non-compliance with the Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA) and flawed procurement processes (Auditor-General South Africa, 2022). In addition, Corruption Watch's 2023 Annual Report listed iNdumiso among municipalities in KwaZulu-Natal with high numbers of community-submitted complaints relating to tender manipulation, nepotism, and incomplete infrastructure projects. Local media investigations (Ngcobo, 2022; Mhlongo, 2023) also reported on "ghost projects" in the municipality cases where funds allocated for roadworks and water reticulation were paid to contractors despite projects being incomplete or substandard.

These documented issues raised serious concerns about the efficiency and effectiveness of public service provision in the municipality, making iNdumiso an appropriate and relevant case for exploring the relationship between corruption and service delivery. Hence, the researcher engaged with community members, local officials, and other stakeholders within the municipality to gather insights and understand the experiences that reflected the realities of service delivery in this study area. The findings will contribute to a localized understanding of corruption and its impacts, ultimately informing strategies for improving governance and service delivery in iNdumiso Municipality.

1.6 Study Objectives

The objectives of the study all pertained to the iNdumiso Municipality and were to:

- Explore community members' and municipal employees' perceptions of how corruption influences service delivery in the study area.
- Identify and describe the forms of corruption perceived to affect service delivery in the municipality.
- Investigate the key drivers of corruption in the study area;

Identify and analyse the approaches used by the iNdumiso Municipality to curb corruption; and to

- Recommend potential solutions to ensure effective service delivery in the study area.

1.7 Research Questions

The following key questions were posed to give direction to the investigation:

1. What is the relationship between corruption and lack of service delivery in the iNdumiso municipality?
2. What are the common forms of corruption pertaining to service delivery in the iNdumiso municipality?
3. What are the key drivers of corruption at the iNdumiso Municipality?
4. What approaches do iNdumiso municipal officials use to curb corruption in service delivery?
5. What can be done to mitigate the issue of service delivery in the iNdumiso municipal area?

1.8 Study Limitations

While this study was able to explore the effects of corruption on service delivery as set out in its objectives, it did face some limitations.

1.8.1 Scope of the study

The research was limited to the iNdumiso Municipality, which restricts the generalizability of the findings to other municipalities in KwaZulu-Natal and South Africa. Variations in governance structures, socio-economic conditions, and community dynamics may yield different results in other locations.

1.8.2 Access to information

Gathering data on corruption was quite challenging, as this topic often involves sensitive issues. At some points the participants were hesitant to discuss their experiences openly due to fear of reprisal or stigma. This reluctance may have impacted the depth and richness of the qualitative data that were collected.

1.8.3 Potential bias

The study relied on self-reported data from community members and officials, and may thus have been subject to bias. It is thus acknowledged that the participants might have

underreported their experiences of corruption or overstated the effectiveness of service delivery due to personal or political affiliations.

1.8.4 Data availability

Accessing reliable and up-to-date data on service delivery metrics and corruption reports posed various challenges that impacted the ability to triangulate the findings effectively.

1.9 Ethical Considerations

Conducting this research on such a sensitive topic as corruption associated with service delivery necessitated careful attention to ethical considerations. Ethical considerations in research are a set of principles that guide one's research design and practices (Bryman and Bell, 2007). These principles include voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, potential for harm, and results communication. Research ethics matter for scientific integrity, human rights and dignity, and collaboration between science and society (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2012). Adherence to these principles ensures that participation in a study is voluntary, informed, and safe for research subjects. The researcher thus ensured that all ethical considerations were rigidly adhered to in order to safeguard the participants' confidentiality and well-being throughout the data collection process and thereafter. These considerations will be unpacked in more detail in Chapter four.

1.10 Chapter Outline

Chapter one: Introduction and Background

This chapter introduces the topic under study and is divided into different subsections. These include the problem statement; the research aim, objectives and questions; research assumptions; significance of the research; the scope of the study; and the limitations that impacted its execution and range of findings.

Chapter two: Literature Review

This chapter presents the literature review on the impact of corruption on service delivery. The discourse focuses on existing literature regarding this topic. The researcher thus examines the findings of similar studies and identifies key themes and gaps in the current knowledge base.

Chapter three: Theoretical Framework

This chapter provides an overview of the two theories that underpinned the study. The first theory that is unpacked is the rational choice theory and the second is the strain theory. By applying the rational choice theory to the emerging data on corruption in Abaqulusi Municipality, the researcher was able to explore how individuals assess their actions within the framework of local governance and service delivery. Moreover, by incorporating the strain theory, this study was able to understand how external pressures and frustrations contribute to the prevalence of corruption and how these dynamics affect service delivery.

Chapter four: Research Methodology

This chapter focuses on the research methodology that was employed. The discourse details the research approach, the research design, the sampling methods, the study population, and the methods of data collection and analysis.

Chapter five: Data presentation, analysis and interpretation

This chapter focuses on analysing the data and interpreting the results in relation to the research questions and objectives. The researcher unpacks the implications of the findings for service delivery in the iNdumiso Municipality area and shares emerging insights that could inform future governance practices at local municipal level.

Chapter six: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This chapter presents an overview of the key findings and the conclusions that were reached. The researcher also offers pertinent recommendations in light of the findings of the study.

1.11 Conclusion

This chapter introduced the background to the study that investigated the impact of corruption on service delivery using a case study of a local municipality in KwaZulu-Natal. It highlighted the prevalence of corruption within local governance and its detrimental effects on public service delivery, particularly in contexts that are marked by socio-economic challenges. The research problem was defined and the need to explore how corruption influences service delivery outcomes was emphasised. The significance of the study was discussed, with specific reference to its contributions to academic knowledge, policy development, and community empowerment. The chapter also outlined the location of the study and acknowledged its limitations, such as potential bias and its limited access to sensitive information. Lastly, key ethical considerations, including informed consent and confidentiality, were addressed to

ensure responsible research practices. This chapter established the groundwork for the discussion on the methodology and the data analysis process that will follow.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Although corruption is a global issue, the severity of its impacts varies greatly from one nation to another. Its impacts can substantially impede national economies' growth and threaten effective government (Ruhiiga, 2009). Corruption is defined and interpreted differently by different organizations and scholars. Yet, they are all centered on the idea of "abuse of public or private position for personal gain." The word 'corruption' is derived from the Latin word 'corruptus' meaning to break up (Mantzaris and Pillay, 2014).

The destructive effect of corruption on the fabric of society and on situations where agents and public officers break the confidence entrusted in them has become a world-wide phenomenon. The literature reveals that public service delivery in most developing countries is ineffective, costly, red-taped, cumbersome, too procedural and not transparent (Tamrakar, 2010). Poor governance and ineffective service delivery remain devastating challenges in most local governments, and these challenges are exacerbated when officials engage in corrupt practices for personal gain.

Corruption is a pervasive issue within many South African municipalities (Ruhiiga, 2009), raising concerns about its direct or indirect impact on service delivery (Kanyane, 2014). Despite the constitutional mandate for municipalities to provide sustainable services to communities (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996), many residents still lack access to basic amenities like water, electricity, and adequate infrastructure. Corruption, manifested in various forms within local government, hinders efficient service delivery (Matebese-Notshulwane, 2021). This pervasive issue undermines democracy, negatively impacts human and socio-economic development, hinders job creation, erodes public trust, and discourages investment (Nengwekhulu, 2009)

2.2 Conceptualization of Types of Corruption

Corruption refers to the misuse of public power or position for personal gain or the abuse of entrusted authority for unethical purposes (Heidenheimer, 1970). There are various types of

corruption that can occur in different contexts. Here are some common types of corruption and their definitions (Heidenheimer, 1970):

- **Bribery:** Offering, giving, receiving, or soliciting something of value (money, gifts, favours) to influence the actions or decisions of a person in a position of trust, such as a government official, for personal or unfair advantage.
- **Embezzlement:** The misappropriation or theft of funds or assets entrusted to one's care, typically by a person in a position of responsibility, such as a company executive or a government employee.
- **Kick-back:** A form of bribe referring to an illegal secret payment made as a return for a favour or service rendered. The term is often used to describe, in an 'innocent' way, the returns of a corrupt or illegal transaction or the gains from rendering a special service.
- **Nepotism:** Favouritism shown to family members or close friends in the distribution of jobs, contracts, promotions, or other benefits, regardless of their qualifications or merit.
- **Extortion:** Coercing or threatening someone to obtain money, property, or favours, often through the use of force, intimidation, or blackmail.
- **Political corruption:** The abuse of political power for personal gain, such as using public resources or influence to benefit oneself or a particular group, rather than the common good.
- **Cronyism:** Appointing or awarding contracts based on personal relationships or friendships, rather than on merit or qualifications.
- **Fraud:** Deliberate deception to secure unfair or unlawful gain, often involving falsification of documents, misrepresentation of facts, or manipulation of information.
- **Money Laundering:** Concealing the origins of illegally obtained money, typically by channelling it through legitimate businesses or financial institutions to make it appear as if it comes from a legal source.

It is important to combat corruption in all its forms as it undermines the rule of law, erodes public trust in institutions, and hinders social and economic development. Governments of all levels, organizations, and individuals should work together to implement transparent and accountable practices to tackle corruption effectively.

2.3 Understanding the Relationship between Corruption and Lack of Service Delivery

The relationship between corruption and service delivery is a complex and critical issue that significantly impacts the functioning of governments and public institutions. Corruption refers to the abuse of power, position, or resources for personal gain, usually involving bribery, embezzlement, nepotism, or other unethical practices (Chen, Dean, Frank and Kumar, 2014). Service delivery, on the other hand, refers to the provision of public services by the government or public institutions to meet the needs and demands of the population. Section 157 of the Constitution (Republic of South Africa, 1996) states that municipalities have the responsibility to make sure that all citizens are provided with services to satisfy their basic needs. Governments at all levels play important roles in service delivery and they need to regulate and facilitate such services by collaborating with other stakeholders and institutions. National governments, that establish service delivery policy frameworks, transfer resources to local governments for implementation (Kanyane, 2014). The White Paper on Local Government (Republic of South Africa, 1998) sets out four key aims for developmental local government. First, it mandates the provision of a basic level of household services, especially electricity, sewerage, and water to households as a priority. Secondly, municipalities should seek to address the “spatial legacy of apartheid separation” through the integration of previously segregated urban areas. Thirdly, local economic development should be stimulated through local economic growth and job creation. Finally, community empowerment and redistribution should be addressed.

The primary responsibility for the provision of basic services usually rests with the city (metro) or municipal government, even if delivery of services is outsourced to the private sector or non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Urban governance for basic services covers the full range of arrangements through which governments and other stakeholders work together to install, deliver, and manage services (Nengwekhulu, 2009). The role of municipal governments may involve some or all of the following: infrastructure provision and maintenance; environmental management; development control; land-use management; community liaison; land leases and sales; and policy development (Chen et al., 2004). These roles are often delegated to larger cities that have a greater capacity to deliver than smaller municipalities, which must nevertheless ensure that residents within their jurisdiction have at least the basic services they require.

In practice, the fulfilment of these service delivery responsibilities is often compromised by corruption, which diverts resources, delays projects, and undermines the efficiency of municipal operations. Instances such as irregular tender awards, politically motivated appointments, and the mismanagement of allocated funds weaken institutional capacity and erode public confidence in government structures. This dynamic is evident in municipalities such as iNdumiso, where delays in road maintenance, water supply interruptions, and stalled infrastructure projects have been reported in both Auditor-General reports and local media. These service delivery shortcomings cannot be fully understood without considering the systemic influence of corruption on municipal performance.

The literature establishes that corruption and poor service delivery reinforce one another, creating a cycle in which weakened institutional capacity enables further misconduct, while inadequate service provision fuels public dissatisfaction and social unrest. This interrelationship underscores the need for strong governance frameworks, transparent procurement processes, and consistent oversight to ensure that the constitutional mandate for basic service provision is met in practice, not only in policy.

2.3.1 Inefficiency and the misallocation of resources

Corruption can lead to the misallocation of resources meant for service delivery (Bolatito, 2023). When funds intended for public services are siphoned off through corrupt practices, the ability to provide essential services such as healthcare, education, infrastructure, and social welfare is compromised (Jaing, 2017). This misallocation can cause the inadequate provision of services and adversely affect the well-being of citizens. Corruption has a negative impact on the ability of municipalities to render services smoothly (Fedorina, 2014). As a result, service delivery is in one way or the other compromised due to the personal interests of municipal officials that emanate as and when essential services should be rendered to members of the public. Chen et al. (2014) state that corruption impacts service delivery in the sense that clientelism, patronage and bribery compromise the rights of citizens against equal access to municipal services while promoting inequalities that limit constituents' access to basic services. Oslo Governance Centre (2004) adds that corruption can lead to a decline in service delivery performance and, as such, this can prevent citizens from accessing basic services.

At the heart of the relationship between corruption, inefficiency, and resource misallocation lies the distortion of the market and the misdirection of public funds. Misallocation of resources occurs when public funds are not allocated in a manner that maximizes public welfare. Corruption distorts resource allocation by prioritising personal interests over the public good, often directing resources to non-productive or low-priority areas. For instance, in the case of Abaqulusi Municipality, corrupt officials directed funds to infrastructure projects that lined their pockets or enhanced their political power. This was done rather than investing in essential services such as healthcare, education, or road maintenance (Herald, 2024).

The misallocation of resources is particularly damaging because it means that critical needs—such as water, sanitation, and housing—are not addressed adequately (Sinharoy, 2019). When corruption drives spending decisions, it leads to the underinvestment in essential services, while funds are diverted to areas that may benefit only a select few. As a result, basic services such as clean water, waste management, and electricity become irregular or substandard, worsening the living conditions of citizens and deepening social inequalities. The misallocation of resources can also occur in the public sector workforce. Corrupt hiring practices, such as the appointment of incompetent individuals based on their political connections rather than their qualifications, lead to inefficiencies in service delivery. Underqualified or untrained personnel

often lack the necessary skills to execute their duties effectively, leading to poor performance, delayed project timelines, and wasted resources (Harrison, 2021).

2.3.2 Reduced quality of services

Corruption often leads to the hiring or promotion of incompetent personnel in public institutions. This practice is based on favouritism rather than merit (Proyava, 2012). This, in turn, results in lower quality services as officials may lack the skills and motivation to perform their duties effectively. The focus may shift from providing quality services to serving the interests of corrupt individuals or groups (Zenyuk, Malinetsky, and Faller, 2016). Corruption in service delivery has been shown to have negative effects on poverty rates, human development indicators, mortality rates, school drop-out rates, trust in governments, and civil unrest. Corruption has also been revealed to have devastating effects on the natural environment, which in some cases can lead to food and water insecurity and mismanagement of precious resources (Laptev, Kovarda, and Shatunova, 2016). The table below summarises different types of service delivery.

Table 2.1: Service delivery levels

Service Type	Level 1 Basic	Level 2 Intermediate	Level 3 Full
Water	Communal standpipes	Yard taps, yard tanks	In-house water
Sanitation	Sewage collection/disposal	VIP Latrines Septic tanks	Full water borne
Electricity	5-8 Amp or non-grid electricity	20 Amps	60 Amps
Roads	Graded	Gravel	Paved/tarred with kerbs
Stormwater drainage	Earth lined open channel	Open channel lined	Piped systems
Solid Waste disposal	Communal (residents)	Communal (contractors)	Kerbside

Source: Education and Training Unit, 2022

Public services are frequently provided by an intricate combination of public and private organizations and go through several levels of government that are often characterised by lax

supervision and poor accountability procedures. For instance, in many underdeveloped nations, contracts between governments and private corporations for the provision of services may not contain the necessary quality control procedures to prevent rising service costs (Ntliziywana, 2017). Some businesses or government organizations that provide services may also not adhere to the necessary rules, ethics, policies, procedures, compliance tools, or integrity management systems to effectively prevent, identify, and punish corruption (Reddy, 2014). Additionally, resources are frequently dispersed thinly. Such governments may also be under pressure to save administrative expenses, which might cause them to prioritize tangible products and services while reducing accountability and control measures. When governments or businesses in charge of providing a service see it as a zero-sum game, there may be structural incentives to economise by offering subpar services or raising rates for services that are ostensibly free or inexpensive (Reddy, 2014).

2.3.3 The undermining of public trust

2.3.3.1 The importance of public trust in governance

According to the OECD(2019) Public trust is essential for the functioning of any democratic system. It fosters citizen participation, political stability, and ensures the legitimacy of government actions. Trust in government enables citizens to feel confident that public services, such as healthcare, education, infrastructure, and security, will be delivered effectively and equitably. In contrast, when trust in public institutions has been erodes, citizens become disillusioned, disengaged, and less likely to participate in governance processes, such as voting or attending public meetings (Pillay and Reddy, 2020). This disengagement weakens democratic structures and can lead to social unrest. At the local level, municipalities are expected to be responsive to the needs of their communities. They play a critical role in the delivery of basic services, the management of public resources, and the provision of infrastructure. However, corruption and inefficiency within these institutions have profound consequences on service delivery and the public's confidence in the system.

2.3.3.2 The broader implications of undermined trust

Corruption erodes public trust in the government and public institutions. When citizens perceive that their tax money is being misused or diverted through corruption, they become less willing to cooperate with authorities or to follow the law (Sheverdyayev, 2016). This lack of trust can hinder effective implementation and service delivery as citizens may not engage with government programs or provide essential feedback for improvement. The International

Monetary Fund (IMF) (2017), suggests that governance is a broad concept that encompasses all aspects of how a country is represented, including its monetary policies, administrative procedures, and adherence to law and order. Unfortunately, administration provides extraordinary incentives for corruption and more opportunities for it, thus undermining the public's trust in its government. Collaboration among numerous stakeholders, including governmental, business, and NGOs, must be based on trust. Partnerships and cooperation could collapse in the absence of confidence, thereby impeding cooperative attempts to provide services effectively and efficiently. The allocation of resources and budgeting choices are influenced by public trust. Citizens may be less inclined to support funding projects or pay taxes or fees that go toward providing services when trust is low (Naidoo, 2012). This may result in insufficient funding for crucial programs and services. Without trust, decision-making procedures may become less transparent and more influenced by political factors than by the requirements of the general public. It may also result in improper resource allocation and a preference for short-term rewards over long-term advantages. The graph below (Figure 2.1) illustrates the factors that were identified by the participants in an earlier study as the most significant in making business investment decisions. The existence of business opportunities, service delivery, and the general state of governance and financial management within the municipality also played a major role in deciding where to establish a business.

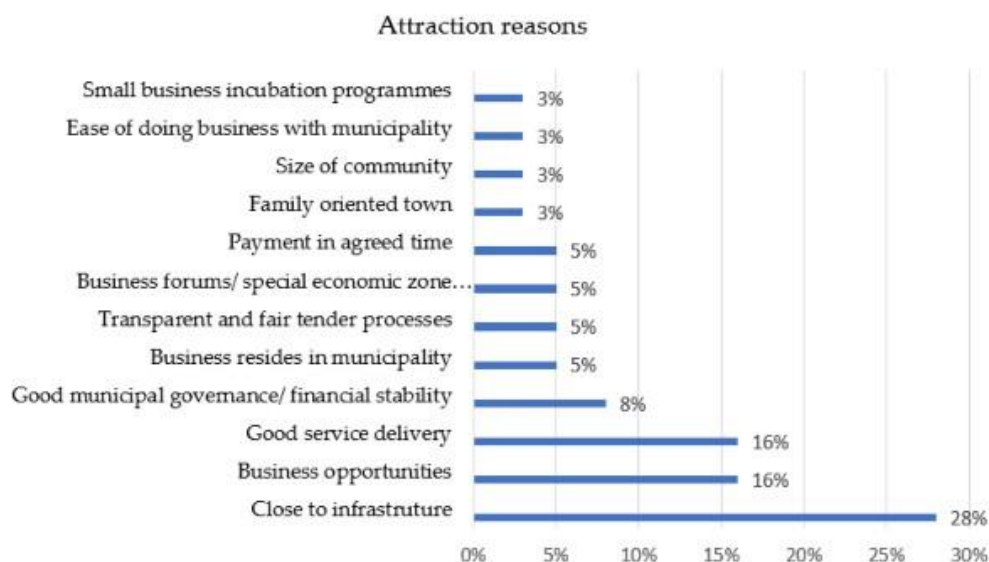


Figure 2.1: Factors that influence business investment decisions

Source: Van der Waldt and Fourie, 2022

2.3.4 High costs of services

2.3.4.1 The link between corruption and high service costs

Corruption in local government significantly increases the cost of public services as it introduces waste, inefficiency, and unnecessary mark-ups (Khan, 2021). Two of the most common forms of corruption in municipal governments are kickbacks or bribes that are demanded and offered in the procurement process (Viswanathan, 2012). When contracts are awarded that are not based on merit but on political loyalty or personal connections, the procurement process is skewed. This leads to overpriced contracts where service providers charge more than necessary for goods or services (Viswanathan, 2012). For example, in some of municipalities, corruption has been alleged in the awarding of tenders for municipal projects. Unqualified contractors are awarded projects at inflated prices, with part of the payment diverted as kickbacks to public officials. As a result, the municipality pays more than the fair market value for services, which leads to a higher overall cost of service delivery (Herald, 2024). Moreover, when public officials siphon off money through corrupt practices, they divert resources from areas that require investment. Instead of investing in efficient systems or cost-effective technology for service delivery, funds are misused or squandered, and these contribute to long-term inefficiencies that increase operational costs (Harrison, 2021). For instance, inefficiencies in service delivery due to corruption can result in delays or the need for rework, which ultimately drives up the cost of completing projects.

2.3.4.2 Misallocation of resources and higher service costs

The misallocation of resources, often a direct consequence of corruption, further drives up the cost of services (Koroma, 2024). When resources are diverted from critical services like education, healthcare, or water infrastructure into non-priority areas or into the pockets of corrupt officials, the local government is forced to spend more to address problems that could have been avoided with proper planning and fund allocation. In most municipalities, political patronage may influence the allocation of resources, leading to investments in projects that benefit political elites rather than the broader community (Koroma, 2024). For example, a project (such as street lighting) might be undertaken in a district where politically connected individuals stand to benefit rather than in the areas most in need of basic services (Herald, 2024). This misallocation means that essential services like healthcare or water delivery suffer, leading to higher long-term costs when these services are eventually provided, often in an inefficient or incomplete manner. Additionally, the nepotistic hiring of employees—where political connections rather than qualifications dictate who gets hired—results in the

appointment of underqualified staff, which further increases costs. Underqualified employees are highly likely to make costly mistakes, require additional training, or fail to deliver services at the expected standards, leading to higher operational costs and a waste of public resources (Rose-Ackerman, 2016).

2.3.4.3 Impact on citizens: High costs of services for the public

The high costs resulting from corruption and inefficiency must ultimately be borne by citizens, particularly those who pay rates and taxes (Bardhan, 2017). Local governments often respond to increased costs by raising taxes, levying service fees, or cutting back on services, all of which place an additional burden on the public (Dzhumashev, 2014). In municipalities where corruption and inefficiency are prevalent, citizens may face inflated fees for services such as water, sanitation, and electricity, even though these services are being delivered poorly or irregularly (Dzhumashev, 2014). Residents are asked to pay higher rates for essential services despite the fact that funds are being misused or diverted elsewhere. This scenario can create a situation where the public becomes increasingly dissatisfied with both the quality of services and the costs they must bear. It further exacerbates social inequality, as the most vulnerable populations—those who depend most heavily on public services—bear the brunt of these increased costs (Pillay and Reddy, 2020). Moreover, when corruption leads to the mismanagement of infrastructure, such as water systems or public transportation, citizens face a deterioration in the quality of these services. Poorly maintained infrastructure can also increase the costs of service delivery as it is associated with frequent breakdowns or disruptions, leading to higher maintenance costs or the need for more frequent repairs (Harrison, 2021).

Addressing corruption and its impact on service delivery requires a multi-faceted approach, including transparent and accountable governance, strengthening of institutions, enforcing the rule of law, promoting a culture of ethics and integrity, and empowering civil society to hold public officials accountable (Mantzaris, 2014). By tackling corruption, governments can improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and equity of service delivery, ultimately benefiting the well-being of their citizens. Since 2012, over 5 000 whistle-blowers have reached Corruption Watch to report cases of corruption within local governments (We are all affected, 2013). These reports expose unsettling overviews of how some communities are taken over to serve private interests, how municipal managers abuse their positions of power, and how hiring and acquisition procedures are routinely manipulated, resulting in disadvantaged communities

being denied their fundamental human rights. Bribery, procurement irregularities, hiring irregularities, abuse of power, and financial mismanagement are the most prevalent forms of corruption at municipal level, according to Corruption Watch's (2013) sources. Furthermore, nepotism, bribery, and contempt for regulations and laws are reported to be standard practices, with involved officials rarely facing responsibility (Smit, 2019) as they prevail in their corrupt practices with impunity.

2.4 Measurement and Indicators of Corruption

2.4.1 The Extent of Corruption in the iNdumiso Municipality

Corruption in the iNdumiso Municipality has been widely reported by both oversight bodies and the media, with tangible consequences for service delivery. The Auditor-General South Africa's 2021/2022 municipal audit outcomes identified irregular expenditure of R48 million, much of it linked to procurement processes that failed to comply with the Municipal Finance Management Act (Auditor-General South Africa, 2022). For example, a R12 million road upgrade project awarded to a politically connected contractor was left incomplete, leaving residents in Ward 7 without safe road access (Ngcobo, *Daily News*, 2022). Similarly, a housing development project initiated in 2020 stalled after contractors were paid despite failing to meet basic safety and construction standards, forcing beneficiaries to remain in temporary structures (Mhlongo, *IOL*, 2023).

These incidents illustrate a direct link between corrupt practices and the municipality's inability to deliver essential services, as financial resources are diverted, projects remain unfinished, and community needs remain unmet. The repeated occurrence of such cases suggests that the issue is not merely a result of isolated misconduct but reflects deeper systemic weaknesses in governance. As observed in other South African municipalities, the persistence of procurement manipulation and misallocation of funds points to an entrenched culture of impunity that undermines development priorities. Corruption is often difficult to prove conclusively, and addressing it requires coordinated efforts from law enforcement agencies, government oversight structures, and active civil society engagement. Maye and Venetor (2014) highlight that many municipalities in South Africa lack adequate financial management strategies, robust control mechanisms, and effective accountability procedures. These shortcomings exacerbate fraud, corruption, and the misappropriation of municipal assets and funds. Furthermore, the inability to effectively manage debt and collect revenue

weakens fiscal stability, leaving municipalities reliant on external financial bailouts from larger metros a dependency that reinforces inefficiency and should not be sustained.

The iNdumiso Municipality, which serves over 243 795 people (Community Survey, 2016), is mandated to provide essential services such as water, housing, sanitation, recreation, transport, solid waste removal, and electricity. The persistence of financial mismanagement, procurement irregularities, and governance failures indicates a systemic problem of corruption rather than sporadic administrative lapses. Reports from the Auditor-General and local watchdog organisations consistently highlight these governance shortcomings, revealing how they contribute to deteriorating service delivery and eroding public trust (Pilusa, 2024). The continued existence of these issues underscores the urgency of implementing stronger oversight mechanisms, professionalising the municipal workforce, and fostering a culture of ethical governance to restore credibility and ensure the delivery of basic services.

2.4.1.1 The Auditor-General's reports and financial irregularities

The Auditor-General of South Africa (AGSA) plays a crucial role in monitoring and evaluating the financial health of municipalities. According to recent AGSA reports (2019, 2020), iNdumiso Municipality has consistently received disclaimed and adverse audit opinions. These audit opinions indicate that the municipality's financial statements were not in compliance with the prescribed standards, and there were significant gaps in transparency and accountability. Key issues identified in the reports include (Auditor-General South Africa, 2020):

- **Unaccounted expenditures:** The AGSA highlighted the municipality's inability to provide adequate documentation for large portions of its expenditures. This suggests potential misappropriation of funds and the diversion of public money for personal or political gain.
- **Fruitless and wasteful expenditure:** There have been reports of unnecessary or excessive spending, often linked to irregular procurement practices, inflated contract prices, and non-compliance with the Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA).
- **Irregularities in financial reporting:** Financial records in the municipality have often been incomplete or inaccurate, making it difficult to trace how public funds were allocated and spent. This lack of clarity raises concerns about the extent of financial mismanagement and the potential for illicit financial activity.

The repeated failure to meet basic financial management standards suggests that corruption is

widespread within the municipality, affecting not only senior political officials but also lower-level administrative staff who are responsible for managing municipal funds.

2.4.1.2 Procurement fraud and tender irregularities

It was found that one of the most prominent areas of corruption in iNdumiso Municipality occurred in the procurement and tendering process. Research by the Public Service Accountability Monitor (PSAM) (2020) and reports from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Cooperative Governance (2020) indicate that procurement fraud has been a significant driver of corruption. The following issues have been identified:

- **Inflated tender prices:** Investigations have uncovered instances where contractors and service providers were paid more than the market value for services rendered. This often happens when contracts are awarded to favoured companies with connections to local political leaders or government officials, rather than those that can provide the best value for money.
- **Non-competitive bidding processes:** Many tenders have been awarded without the proper competitive bidding process, bypassing required checks and balances. In some cases, tenders were given to companies with dubious qualifications or no track record in public service delivery.
- **Fictitious projects:** There have been instances where projects were reported as completed or underway, but investigations revealed that the work either never started or was substandard. These ‘ghost’ projects, in which funds were allocated but no tangible results were produced, were used to siphon off public resources.

The abuse of the procurement system in iNdumiso municipality has resulted in a significant misallocation of resources, where public funds were channelled into personal or political interests rather than toward meeting the needs of the community.

2.4.1.3 Investigations and legal action

Despite the clear evidence of corruption, legal actions and investigations into corrupt practices in iNdumiso Municipality have been inconsistent and slow. While there have been a few high-profile investigations, such as the probe into alleged misappropriation of funds in the procurement of infrastructure projects, many cases of corruption have gone unpunished. The slow pace of legal proceedings and lack of political will to pursue criminal charges against

corrupt officials have emboldened those involved in corrupt activities(Rotberg, 1017). Moreover, failure to prosecute corrupt individuals has had a detrimental effect on accountability in iNdumiso. Without consequences for wrongdoing, corrupt practices continue to thrive, and the municipality's ability to deliver services remains severely compromised.

2.4.2 Challenges in measuring the extent of corruption

Measuring the extent of corruption is challenging due to a combination of inherent complexities and limitations in available methodologies (Holmes, 2015). Reliable and comprehensive data on corruption are often lacking. Many corrupt transactions are intentionally kept off official

records, making it difficult to access the necessary information for measurement (Johnston, 2002). By its very nature, corruption is a secretive activity that is frequently against the interests of those involved. Therefore, even in an anonymous setting, self-reporting might not be truthful because those engaged might desire to avoid bringing up and inviting attention to their corrupt activities. The amount of corruption that is discovered by reporters and law enforcement authorities might not be a reliable indicator of the overall level of corruption (Borlini, Leonardo, and Marco, 2014). Depending on the level of complexity of the actors engaged and the effectiveness of the monitoring and enforcement measures in place in the relevant jurisdiction, documented incidents may just represent the proverbial tip of the iceberg or a sizable portion of the entire issue. Such information may even result in misrepresentation. Whistleblowers, witnesses, and individuals with information about corruption may be hesitant to come forward due to fear of retaliation or harm (Holmes, 2015). This fear can inhibit the collection of accurate information about corrupt activities.

2.4.2.1 Inadequate data and poor record-keeping

Corruption can often thrive in environments where record-keeping is poor or deliberately manipulated. In the case of iNdumiso Municipality, as highlighted by the Auditor-General's (2021) report, incomplete or inaccurate financial records are a persistent issue. Without reliable data on the municipality's expenditures, tender processes, or procurement contracts, it is difficult to measure the true extent of financial mismanagement and corruption. Furthermore, weak monitoring systems and a lack of internal audits make it difficult to track irregularities in municipal accounts. Financial documents may be falsified or intentionally obscured to prevent detection of wrongdoing, and when records are not available or accessible, assessing corruption becomes a guessing game (Isabirye & Moloi, 2023).

2.4.2.2 Methodological challenges in measuring corruption

Quantifying corruption requires reliable data and robust methodologies, but there is no universally accepted standard for measuring corruption in local governments (Langseth, 2017). Different methods, such as surveys, audits, and qualitative assessments, may yield varying results depending on the scope, accuracy, and sampling strategies employed.

- Surveys: According to Datzer(2013)While surveys of residents or public officials can provide valuable insights into perceptions of corruption, these methods are often biased by factors like fear of reprisal, personal opinions, and social desirability. Respondents

may underreport corruption due to fear or may overstate it based on their own experiences or beliefs (Villarino, 2021).

- Audits: Financial audits are critical for detecting misuse of public funds, but they require access to comprehensive and accurate records, which may not always be available. Even when audits identify irregularities, the full extent of corruption may not be revealed unless deeper, more targeted investigations are carried out (Perumal, 2022).
- Social media and whistleblowers: Increasingly, social media and whistleblowers have played a role in exposing corruption (Smith and Graycar, 2011). However, these sources can be unreliable, incomplete, or subject to manipulation. Furthermore, they may reflect isolated instances of corruption rather than provide a full picture of systemic issues within local government (Smith and Graycar, 2011).

The goal of direct ways of evaluating corruption is to gather factual data about corruption using statistical and standardised approaches (Ackerman and Palifka, 2016). In addition to official data (such as reported corruption cases, conviction rates, and results of electoral scrutiny), they can also include experience-based sample surveys that gather information on the experiences of representative samples of a given population. They measure actual corruption experiences rather than perceptions of corruption. Indirect techniques of measuring corruption are based on perceived levels of corruption rather than actual incidences of corruption (Toke, 2010). They are frequently employed as it is challenging to quantify actual instances of corruption. Indirect techniques may rely on expert evaluations (chosen experts are asked to evaluate corruption trends and patterns in a certain nation or group of countries) or other forms of surveys that place more emphasis on perceived levels of corruption than actual levels (Grayca, 2015). Sometimes they are ‘surveys of surveys’ or composite assessments that combine different statistical data into a single indication.

Despite these challenges, organisations like Transparency International (2023), the World Bank (2023), and others have created composite indicators and corruption perception indices that are meant to shed light on the level of corruption in various nations. Although these indices frequently draw from surveys, the opinions of experts, and publicly available data, they nevertheless have their limitations and might not accurately depict the full scope of corruption (Johnston, 2002).

2.4.3 Corruption in the iNdumiso Municipality and its impact on service delivery

Corruption in local governments has been a significant barrier to effective governance and service delivery in South Africa, and iNdumiso Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal is no exception. According to Lekubi (2015) In most municipalities, several forms of corruption, specifically procurement fraud, political patronage, bribery, and misappropriation of funds have taken root, and these have severely impacted the municipality's ability to deliver essential public services to its residents. These corrupt practices distort the allocation of resources, delay critical projects, and undermine the transparency and accountability needed for effective local governance (Lekubi, 2015). The presence of corruption in the iNdumiso Municipality has had a measurable and detrimental effect on the quality, timeliness, and reliability of service delivery. Oversight reports and media investigations reveal a pattern of procurement manipulation, financial mismanagement, and politically influenced appointments that have hindered the municipality's ability to fulfil its constitutional mandate. The Auditor-General's 2021/2022 audit found that irregular expenditure of R48 million was incurred, largely due to non-compliance with procurement laws, while several infrastructure projects either stalled or failed to meet quality standards. These governance failures translate directly into service delivery shortfalls, with communities left without adequate access to basic services such as clean water, electricity, and safe roads.

One notable example is the incomplete road upgrade project in Ward 7, where a politically connected contractor failed to deliver the contracted work despite full payment (Ngcobo, *Daily News*, 2022). The absence of proper road infrastructure has restricted mobility, increased transport costs, and reduced economic activity in the affected area. Similarly, the stalled housing project initiated in 2020 left intended beneficiaries in substandard temporary shelters (Mhlongo, *IOL*, 2023), undermining their right to adequate housing and exposing them to health and safety risks. These examples demonstrate how corruption directly diverts resources away from public benefit, leaving essential community needs unmet. The municipal performance reports further indicate that delays in water provision projects and inconsistent waste removal services have been linked to budget overruns caused by irregular expenditure. In many instances, funds allocated for critical services were reallocated to cover cost escalations in projects plagued by non-compliance and mismanagement. This not only disrupts current service delivery but also reduces the municipality's capacity to plan and fund future projects, creating a cycle of underperformance. Below is an explanation of the impact of each type of corruption on the successful delivery of services.

2.4.3.1 The impact of bribery on service delivery

Bribery has a negative impact on service delivery, particularly in public institutions and government organisations. Bribery frequently entails diverting resources from their original purpose. Funds that should be provided for public services may be siphoned off for personal gain, leaving insufficient resources for the effective operation of important services such as healthcare, education, infrastructure, and others (Kaufmann, Montoriol-Garriga, and Recanatini, 2008). A lack of service delivery due to bribery can hinder socio-economic development (Fufa, 2024). Without proper access to healthcare, education, clean water, and other essential services, communities struggle to improve their quality of life and break free from the clutches of poverty (Fufa, 2021). Bribery can have an adverse impact on service delivery, resulting in inefficient resource allocation, poor service quality, loss of public trust, and causing a barrier to development. To mitigate these negative consequences, measures to prevent corruption, improve transparency, and strengthen accountability procedures are critical. “In systems where bribery is prevalent, meritocracy is compromised. Rather than positions and opportunities being awarded based on skills, qualifications, and experience, they may be obtained through connections and bribes. This undermines the overall competence of service providers and reduces the quality-of-service delivery” (Chetwynd and Spector, 2003:5). Bribery hinders service delivery innovation and originality. When bribery decides success rather than genuine ideas and solutions, service providers are less motivated to improve and innovate, stifling progress and development.

2.4.3.2 The impact of embezzlement of public funds on service delivery

The lack of good financial governance and continuous incurring of unwanted expenditure remain challenges that obstruct service delivery (Dzomira, 2017). This results in the mismanagement of public funds and in maladministration in different government departments. The lack of accountability in public finances has been accompanied by the unauthorized procurement of products and services as well as unaccounted public funds (AGSA, 2017; Dzomira, 2017; Sibanda, 2017; Saka, 2016; Naidoo, 2012). Furthermore, public officials have abused their positions by misusing public monies for personal gain (Edoun, 2015). As a result, incapacity to manage public finances is a result of inadequate compliance with applicable rules and regulations (AGSA, 2017). This has diminished service delivery and placed vulnerable persons in a precarious position. Embezzlement can cause delays in planned projects, initiatives, or programs. Lack of funds can disrupt timelines and prevent the completion of critical projects that would otherwise have benefitted the intended recipients of these services.

2.4.3.3 The impact of public procurement on service delivery

“In terms of indirect costs, corruption in public procurement leads to distortion of competition, limited market access and reduced business appetite for foreign investors. Not surprisingly, companies increasingly demand improved fairness of public procurement procedures” (Abioro, 2021:7-9). Corruption and irregularities can inflate contract prices and costs, as suppliers may pay bribes or offer kickbacks to secure contracts. Higher costs can strain budgets and reduce the funds available for service delivery, potentially limiting the reach and effectiveness of programs.

Since the launch of Corruption Watch in January 2012 to the end of January 2014, 465 complaints were lodged with the civil society organization alleging corruption in public procurement. In terms of provincial spread, 149 (or 32%) of the reports came from Gauteng, with all three metropolitans in the province heavily implicated in graft allegations. KwaZulu-Natal was next with 65 allegations, followed by Free State with 43. The Table 2.2 below shows the number of reports submitted to the organisation that alleged tender corruption in major metros:

Table 2.2: Reports of alleged tender corruption 2012-2014

[State dates of the survey...not sure red is correct](#)

City of Johannesburg	61 reports
City of Tshwane	29 reports
eThekweni	19 reports
Ekurhuleni	16 reports
City of Cape Town	11 reports
Mangaung	6 reports
Nelson Mandela Bay	5 reports
Polokwane	4 reports

Source: Corruption Watch, 2017

When procurement processes are compromised, there is a risk that benefits may not be distributed equitably among the intended recipients (Graycar, 2015). This can perpetuate social inequalities and hinder progress toward social and economic development goals. Effective procurement methods that ensure continuity, quality, and value for money are required for sustainable service delivery. Improper procurement might undermine the long-term viability of programs and projects. Procurement accounts for a large part of public resources and it is therefore important that the tender procedures occur in an accountable, transparent and well-managed way. Corruption in public procurement takes away benefits meant for citizens and lowers levels of public trust and confidence in the government (Abioro, 2021). It can also be linked to service delivery protests and the erosion of honest competitive bidding. To limit the impact of procurement irregularities on service delivery, businesses must prioritize openness, accountability, fair competition, and adherence to ethical norms. Implementing rigorous supervision systems, encouraging whistleblowing, conducting audits, and cultivating an integrity culture are all critical elements toward assuring the integrity of the procurement process and, ultimately, the effective delivery of services to people in need (Corruption Watch, 2017). Table 2.3 summarises examples of procurement irregularities in the tendering process.

Table 2.3: Tendering red flags and corrupt activities

Failure to make bidding documents Available	Failure to make bidding documents available
Short or inadequate notice to bidders	Short or inadequate notice to bidders
Excluding qualified bidders, corruption	Excluding qualified bidders, corruption

Multiple contracts awarded to the same Companies	Corruption
Rotation of winning bidders	Collusive bidding
Unreasonably high/low bids	Collusive bidding, unbalanced bidding, corruption
Non-transparent bid-opening procedures	Manipulation of bids, excluding qualified bidders, corruption
Disqualifications that are poorly supported	Excluding qualified bidders
Pressure to select a certain contractor, subcontractor, or agent	Corruption
Winning bid is very close to the budget or Estimate	Unbalanced bidding, corruption
Long, unexplained delays in the contract award or negotiations	Manipulation of bids, corruption

Source: Corruption Watch, 2017:10

2.5 Effects of poor service delivery

2.5.1 Social and human development

2.5.1.1 Social unrest and inequality

Disparities in service delivery can lead to social unrest and protests as marginalised communities and individuals feel neglected and deprived. Social cohesion can deteriorate, leading to tensions and conflicts between different groups within society. Several reasons for protests in south African communities include allegations of rampant corruption and nepotism within local government structures (Morudu, 2017). As a result, dissatisfaction with the delivery of basic municipal services such as running water, electricity and toilets, especially in informal settlements, are the primary concerns. A lack of reliable public services, such as water supply and sanitation, is particularly detrimental to health outcomes. In Abaqulusi, where access to basic services such as clean water is often unreliable, communities face an increased risk of waterborne diseases such as cholera and dysentery. Inadequate sanitation facilities, including an insufficient sewage system and the lack of public toilets, also lead to the spread of diseases, thus further affecting the health of the community (World Bank, 2021). Unemployment (officially at around 23%), high levels of poverty, poor infrastructure, and the

lack of houses add to the growing dissatisfaction in these and other poor communities. Severe dissatisfaction was expressed in the wake of political promises during the election period that all or most of these issues would be addressed once the new government was in place. For example, there were 237 incidents of service delivery protests in 2018, which was an increase from 152 in 2017 and 137 in 2016 (Municipal Data and Intelligence Survey Report, 2017). Gamson (2013) mentioned that Protest action in more isolated and impoverished communities is especially concerning, because the near-term economic prospects for these areas are frequently bleak. With the government overburdened by the task of building basic infrastructure and businesses unwilling to invest in underdeveloped areas, there is no clear path to economic development in these areas in the medium term. This is significant because residents will continue to rely on the government for basic services unless employment opportunities are created. Failure to do so will continue to put the most vulnerable individuals in danger, and in the absence of alternative effective avenues for engagement, these terrible conditions will fuel additional discontent.

2.5.1.2 Unemployment and poverty

According to Mashaite (2014) Unemployment and poverty are deeply interconnected issues that often perpetuate each other, and poor service delivery can exacerbate both in municipalities like iNdumiso Municipality. The inability of local governments to provide basic services such as education, healthcare, infrastructure, and economic opportunities directly impacts the unemployment rate and the prevalence of poverty in the region (Mukhari, 2019). Lack of adequate services often results in high unemployment rates as there is not enough support to foster economic activities or create job opportunities. This, in turn, leads to increased poverty levels and high crime rates.

2.5.1.3 Unemployment and lack of economic opportunities

One of the most immediate effects of poor service delivery is the lack of economic opportunities for residents. In South African Municipalities, unreliable infrastructure, especially in sectors such as transport, electricity, and water supply, creates barriers to economic activity, entrepreneurship, and business growth. For instance, when roads are poorly maintained, rural communities often find it difficult to access markets, suppliers, or even employment opportunities, and these conditions isolate them even further economically (Pillay and Reddy, 2020). Without basic services such as electricity or a reliable water supply,

businesses are forced to operate in suboptimal conditions, making it difficult for local entrepreneurs to thrive. As a result, the local economy remains stagnant, leading to high unemployment rates. With fewer businesses able to operate effectively, the local job market shrinks, and residents have fewer opportunities to secure stable employment. Additionally, the lack of proper service delivery makes it hard to attract investments to the region. Private businesses and industries often look for areas where basic services like reliable electricity, water, and sanitation are available to ensure smooth operations. If these services are unreliable or non-existent, the region becomes less attractive to investors. Without investment, the economy cannot grow, and the unemployment rate continues to rise (Monkam, 2014).

Local governments are responsible for the provision of safety and security, and the mandate for crime and violence prevention is derived from the Constitution, national legislations, and other policy frameworks (Lindqvist, 2012). Local governments, as the primary points of contact between the state and communities, need to be empowered with capacities and resources in order to play a stronger, more pro-active role in driving integrated, long-term localized safety responses. Community safety remains a primary concern among local communities it has an influence on how people perceive and value their neighbourhood. In particular, a low crime rate and reduced anti-social behaviour are frequently seen as preconditions for a good place to live. It is for these reasons that community safety should continue to be a key concern for municipal managers.

2.5.2 Economic development

According to Raophala (2013:15), at the macro level, “the literature generally shows that corruption has a negative, direct impact on economic growth and development. Corruption also has an indirect effect on a country’s economic performance by affecting many factors that fuel economic growth such as investment, taxation, level, composition, and effectiveness of public expenditure”. The Local Government Municipal Systems Act No. 32 of 2000 (Republic of South Africa, 2000) establishes the core principles and mechanisms that are necessary to enable municipalities to move progressively towards the social and economic upliftment of local communities and to ensure universal access to essential services that are affordable for all. The impact of poor service delivery on economic development can be significant and multifaceted. When basic services such as education, healthcare, infrastructure, and public utilities are inadequately provided or inefficiently managed, it can hinder a country’s overall economic growth and well-being (Naidoo, 2012).

Poor service delivery often affects vulnerable and marginalised populations disproportionately and exacerbates social inequality. Unequal access to education, healthcare, and other essential services can limit upward social mobility and result in reduced economic participation. Poor service delivery in education and healthcare can limit the development of human capital, which is essential for economic growth (Reddy, 2014). A poorly educated and unhealthy population is unlikely to contribute meaningfully to the workforce, innovation, and entrepreneurship. The functions of the Local Economic Development initiative in municipalities are to undertake economic research and conduct analyses to identify opportunities and priorities within the municipality by developing and implementing strategies for Local Economic Development (LED) in line with the Provincial Growth and Development Strategies (2007).

2.6 Approaches and Strategies to Mitigate Corruption

2.6.1 The South African legislative framework

The Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act No. 12 of 2004 (Republic of South Africa, 2004) seeks to reinforce existing preventative and punitive measures to combat corruption. Additionally, it attempts to define corruption and offences linked to corrupt behaviour as crimes, and to establish procedures for investigating corruption and associated corrupt behaviours. This Act also mandates the creation and endorsement of a register to impose certain restrictions on individuals and businesses found guilty of corrupt activities involving bids and contracts, and to impose a responsibility on certain people in positions of authority to disclose certain corrupt transactions. Finally, it intends to establish extraterritorial jurisdiction over offenses involving corruption and other offenses related to corrupt practices (Republic of South Africa, 2004).

The Local Government and Municipal Finance Management Act of 2003 (MFMA) and the Public Finance Management Act of 1999 (PFMA). Both govern and oversee government expenditure to cut down on needless and unapproved expenditures of public funds as well as to nullify corruption in the procurement process. The PFMA and MFMA offer approaches to deal with financial mismanagement in the context of public sector procurement (which may constitute corruption). An investigation will be conducted into any political official's expenditure that is unlawful or raises questions about possible financial mismanagement and, if necessary, a disciplinary hearing will follow in accordance with the established processes.

The ethics expectations for public servants, which are outlined in many statutes like the Executive Members' Ethics Act of 1998 and the Public Service Act of 1994, also apply to the administration of gifts and hospitality activities.

Theletsane (2013) states that the existence of these legislations alone has not helped in the fight against corruption. He further argues that these legislations are ignored by unethical leaders who lack discipline. Mankaya and Nkuna (2014:15) support this notion by stating: "As promising as these legislations are, they continue to fail because there are no punitive measures for non-compliance". Every municipality in South Africa, according to Portfolio Municipalities in South Africa (2008), faces the challenge of providing services that foster community development. Faster service delivery and flawless financial management in accordance with standards are now more important than ever. The primary goals of the Municipal Finance Management Act of 2003 (Republic of South Africa, 2003) are to create treasury norms and standards for the local sphere of government and to ensure sound and sustainable management of the financial affairs of municipalities and other entities in that sector. The powers and functions of lower levels of government must be clearly defined in an acceptable legislative and legal structure, and the central government must be able to relinquish authority and recognise the sub-national government's relevance in the delivery of services through this process (Ekpo, 2008). According to a report by South African Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (2009), poor compliance with local legislative and regulatory systems is frequent in South Africa, resulting in service delivery inadequacies.

2.6.2 The local government anti-corruption strategy

The government issued the Local Government Anti-Corruption Strategy in 2006, which outlines programs to eradicate corruption and enhance the accountability of local government employees (Mantzaris, 2014). This strategy encapsulates nine strategic pillars that range from citizen empowerment and awareness of corruption, improving transparency and the integrity of the public procurement system, to the strengthening of oversight and anti-corruption agencies for improved management (Mantzaris and Pillay, 2014a). The National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS), now in development, is a new government initiative to establish national consensus on how to tackle corruption. Corruption is rife, and such measures are important, as the following excerpt will testify: "A few days after the hosting of the seminar, one of our investigators from the City Integrity and Investigations Unit was arrested for allegedly soliciting a bribe from a businessman. As the municipality, we subscribe to the rule

of law and good governance. We also support any initiative that seeks to root out fraud and corruption” (eThekweni Municipality, 2022:3).

Sekibuule (2012:23-27) states: “South Africa’s anti-corruption framework is designed as a control-based approach that is multi-faceted and executed through legislation, supporting regulations, audit trails, anti-corruption structures, law enforcement, and public vigilance and reporting structures, amongst others”. Compared to other countries like Botswana, Singapore and Hong Kong, there is growing doubt about the effectiveness of the law-directed anti-corruption approaches in South Africa and the country’s anti-corruption institutions (Majila et al., 2014). According to Cronin (2013), this failure can be attributed to poor management, which results in the weak application of laws and regulations and the subsequent deterioration of the application of internal systems which, in turn, creates opportunities for corruption. Ironically, after the implementation of this plan, corruption has worsened. State capture is estimated to cost the country R1,5 trillion, or roughly a third of South Africa's R4,9 trillion GDP. In essence, it is equivalent to ruining four months' worth of all South Africans' labour output. According to the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) (Transparency International, 2020), a key global barometer of public sector corruption, South Africa's score increased from 43/100 in 2012 to 44/100 in 2020, reflecting only a one-point improvement. It is evident that there has been no appreciable increase or decrease in South Africa's score over the last eight years. This ranking also implies that government efforts to lessen the underlying causes of corruption have failed, demonstrating the futility of the current anti-corruption approach.

2.6.3 iNdumiso Municipality’s anti-corruption and anti-fraud policy

2.6.3.1 Objectives of the policy

The Anti-Corruption and Anti-Fraud Policy of the iNdumiso Municipality is intended to combat corruption by establishing clear procedures for reporting, investigating, and addressing fraudulent and corrupt activities. The policy is underpinned by a zero-tolerance approach to corruption and purports to ensure that all forms of fraud and corruption are swiftly addressed. One of the key components of the policy is the whistleblower-protection mechanism, which allows employees and members of the public to report corrupt activities anonymously and without fear of retaliation (Pillay and Reddy, 2020). This mechanism is designed to create an environment where whistleblowers feel safe to report corruption, particularly given the risks involved in exposing powerful individuals engaged in illicit activities. The policy also outlines

the reporting procedures for alleged corruption and fraud, both internally to municipal officials and externally to independent agencies such as the Public Protector or the Special Investigating Unit (SIU). These agencies are tasked with investigating allegations impartially and ensuring that municipality employees and officials remain accountable for their actions. The policy stresses the importance of transparency in decision-making, especially in areas such as procurement, public tenders, and hiring practices (Harrison, 2021).

Another critical component of the policy is its focus on training and capacity-building for municipal employees. The policy mandates regular training on ethical behaviour, public service integrity, and the legal consequences of engaging in corrupt activities. By equipping employees with the knowledge and tools to identify and avoid corruption, the municipality hopes to reduce the likelihood of corrupt practices occurring within its ranks (UNDP, 2020). Additionally, the policy establishes clear sanctions for those found guilty of corruption, including dismissal, criminal prosecution, and financial penalties. However, despite these well-structured components, the practical effectiveness of the policy has been called into question due to a number of challenges in its implementation.

2.6.3.2 Effectiveness of the Anti-Corruption Policy in iNdumiso Municipality

While the anti-corruption policy is comprehensive in its design, its effectiveness in curbing corruption in iNdumiso Municipality remains limited. A key challenge lies in political interference, which often compromises the implementation of anti-corruption measures. In many instances, political figures, or their allies, use their influence to protect corrupt practices or suppress investigations into fraudulent activities (Public Service Commission, 2021). This issue is particularly evident in cases of nepotism, where family members or political allies are given jobs without following proper recruitment procedures. According to the whistleblower reports, many of the call centre agents and other municipal employees were hired because of their familial ties to councillors, rather than merit (Herald, 2024). This lack of transparency in hiring not only undermines the municipality's ability to deliver effective services, but also perpetuates a culture of corruption that remains difficult to address.

Furthermore, the lack of independent investigations within the municipality raises concerns about the impartiality of the policy's implementation. Although the policy encourages the use of external oversight bodies such as the Public Protector and SIU, there were instances when these bodies were bypassed, and investigations were either delayed or suppressed. This lack of

independent oversight further weakens the municipality's anti-corruption efforts, as those in power are often able to manipulate the system to avoid consequences (World Bank, 2021).

In addition to political interference, there is also the issue of insufficient resources allocated to anti-corruption initiatives. While the municipality may have well-structured policies on paper, there is a lack of trained staff and adequate funding to effectively enforce these policies. In many cases, investigations into alleged corruption are either not conducted at all or are poorly executed due to the shortage of skilled personnel and limited financial resources. This underfunding results in weak enforcement and impunity for corrupt officials, which in turn perpetuates a cycle of corruption within the municipality (Pillay and Reddy, 2020).

2.6.3.3 Challenges associated with implementation and enforcement

The key challenges that impede the implementation of the anti-corruption policy in South African Municipalities include the following (Harrison, 2021):

- **Political Patronage:** Political interference remains one of the most significant barriers to effective anti-corruption efforts. Political figures and their allies may use their positions to protect corrupt practices and prevent investigations from being conducted properly.
- **Lack of independent oversight:** The municipality often bypasses independent bodies such as the Public Protector and SIU, which weakens the accountability mechanisms in place and reduces the transparency of the investigative process.
- **Resource constraints:** Insufficient funding and staffing for anti-corruption initiatives mean that many cases go uninvestigated, or are not fully addressed, resulting in weak enforcement of the policy.
- **Weak public trust:** Ongoing corruption scandals and the failure of the municipality to act on allegations have led to public disillusionment. Many residents believe that the municipality is either unable or unwilling to address corruption, which reduces public participation in governance and undermines the credibility of the policy.

2.7 Chapter Summary

Corruption significantly undermines service delivery by distorting resource allocation and compromising the quality and equity of public services. This literature reviewed exposed factors such as lack of transparency, weak governance, and low wages that contribute to corrupt practices. Bribery, embezzlement, and favouritism are common manifestations of corruption

that impact service delivery and which, in turn, lead to inequitable access, diminished service quality, erosion of public trust, economic stagnation, and social unrest. Combating corruption requires legal reforms, transparency measures, and merit-based systems to ensure effective, equitable, and high-quality public services. It is unquestionable that corruption has a negative effect on how services are delivered and that it harms residents' lives and prevents societal advancement. It takes interdisciplinary work to combat corruption, from legislative changes and transparency programs to shifting cultural norms. Moreover, members of society can strive to offer equitable, excellent public services that support growth and societal well-being if they stand together to fight corruption.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

Theoretical frameworks are essential components of research studies as they provide a foundation for understanding and interpreting the collected data (Becker, 2014). In this chapter, the researcher elucidates the two theoretical frameworks that underpinned the study, namely the rational choice theory and the collective action theory. The rational choice theory is a behavioural approach that assumes individuals make decisions based on rational considerations as they weigh the potential benefits and consequences of their actions (Akers and Sellers, 2013). The collective action theory, on the other hand, explains how groups of individuals can work together to achieve a common goal despite the challenges of coordination and trust. The purpose of this chapter is to explore how these two theoretical frameworks were applied to understand corruption as a phenomenon that is rife in local municipalities. The discourse will examine how the rational choice theory can help one understand individual decision-making in social work, while the collective action theory can help us understand how groups of individuals can work together to achieve a common goal. By using these theoretical frameworks, the researcher hoped to gain deeper understanding of the complex social issues under study and to develop effective strategies for addressing them.

The following sections provide a detailed overview of the key concepts, assumptions, and applications of the two selected theories. These theoretical frameworks were used to guide the data analysis process and to understand how effective solutions may be developed to address the social dilemmas caused by corruption in the local governance sphere.

3.2 The Rational Choice Theory

3.2.1 Description and main postulate of the rational choice theory

When introducing his discussion on the rational choice theory, Wiley (2021:1) refers to components of this theory in the plural. He thus states:

“Rational choice theories are among the most prominent theoretical accounts of human behaviour there are. While they have been used widely in the social and behavioural sciences, their use goes far beyond economics, sociology, and political science and extends into disciplines such as philosophy, evolutionary biology, and anthropology. They furthermore

ground whole research areas that are largely concerned with their theoretical and conceptual advancements, such as the formal decision and game theory. As such, rational choice theories (RCT) occupy a central place in theoretical and applied areas of contemporary science.”

The key definition of the rational choice theory makes the assumption that the average person makes rational choices and decisions that are based on rational information and that will potentially lead to results that benefit the person or align with their personal beliefs (Beaudry-Cyr, 2015). In most cases, the assumption is that the outcomes of the choice or choices are in the best interest of the individual making them. According to Akers and Sellers (2013), the key concept of the rational choice theory is rooted in the analysis of human behaviour that was posited by an Italian scholar named Marchese Beccaria. The main point of his examination describes the human being as a rational actor who calculates rationality using ends and means formulae. According to Beccaria, “people (freely) choose all behaviour, both conforming and deviant, based on their rational calculations. The central element of calculation involves a cost benefit analysis: pleasure versus pain” (Beccaria, 1764). In his line of reasoning, Beccaria determined that, in order to prevent criminal or deviant behaviour, the form of punishment should be equivalent to the severity of the crime that was committed. The concept of punishing criminals in accordance with the crime they committed is not only to prevent the criminal from committing a similar act in the future (special deterrence), but also to warn the general public of the possible consequences of such behaviour (general deterrence). This became known as the deterrence theory (Lovett, 2006). The rational choice theory differs from many other criminal theories because its main principle defines crime solely as an individual choice. The concept does not focus on other crucial factors like individual traits, criminal associations, or inner strains that may also play a role in pushing an individual to commit a certain crime or crimes (Akers and Sellers, 2013).

The ‘rationality’ concept that is entrenched in the rational choice theory adopts a specific and narrow definition, which simply means that “an individual acts as if balancing costs against benefits to arrive at action that maximizes personal advantage” (Friedman, 1953:34). Therefore, as it is rooted in methodological individualism, the rational choice theory models human behaviour as the result of individual, self-interested preferences (Hall and Taylor, 1996; Elster, 1989). Lovetts (2006) points out that people are calculating and strategic; thus, they carefully weigh the costs and benefits of certain actions before undertaking them. Moreover, individuals have fixed, well-defined, ranked, and consistent preferences, and they behave

instrumentally to achieve those preferences. The ultimate goals individuals harbour are to maximize utility and to attain whatever goal makes them happier, more satisfied, or better off than they are, such as acquiring power and/or money. The rational choice theory recognises that individuals operate within constraints, such as having limited resources in terms of time and money, and choices are then made in consideration of these constraints. Differently put, rational actors weigh the costs and benefits of their options and take into account the resources they have at their disposal (Hillman, 2004).

3.2.2 Historical background of the rational choice theory

The rational choice theory, also known as the choice theory or the rational action theory, is a theory for understanding and often modelling social and economic as well as individual behaviour. It is the main paradigm in the currently dominant microeconomics school of thought (Matsueda, 2013). It is also central to modern political science as well as other disciplines such as sociology and philosophy (Matsueda, 2013). Becker (1974) avers that “the rational choice theory was early popularized by a 1992 Nobel Memorial Prize Laureate in Economic Science, Gary Becker, who was one of the first to apply rational actor models more widely”. The roots of the rational choice theory can be traced back to classical economists like Adam Smith, who proposed that individuals, in pursuing their self-interest, inadvertently contribute to the greater good of society. In the 18th and 19th centuries, classical economists developed theories of utility, marginalism, and rational decision-making, laying the groundwork for later developments in the rational choice theory. Elster (1989) elucidates the essence of the rational choice theory when he says: “When faced with several courses of action, people usually do what they believe is likely to have the best overall outcome”.

The rational choice theory gained prominence in sociology and political science during the latter half of the 20th century. According to Frank (2005), Sociologists like James Coleman applied rational choice principles to explain social phenomena and to emphasise individual rationality in social interactions. Political scientists also embraced the rational choice theory to analyse voting behaviour, political institutions, and policy-making processes.

The rational choice theory arguably developed as part of the behavioural revolution in American political science of the 1950s and 1960s that sought to investigate how individuals behaved using empirical methods (Vold and Bernard, 2005). The approach has increasingly been adopted in political science, especially in the United States. According to Scott (2000),

Anthony Downs (1957) was the first to apply the rational choice theory to electoral behaviour and party competition. His work, reviewed by Hinich and Munger (1997), went further to revolutionise studies on elections.

The rational choice theory begins, firstly, from the viewpoint of the individual, as opposed to viewing several individuals interacting together, social situations, or groups, and the individual's interests are always the starting point of the theory (Frank, 2005). In the mid-20th century, the game theory, which was a branch of mathematics and economics, emerged as a significant contributor to the rational choice theory. Mathematicians like John von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern developed the game theory to analyse strategic interactions among rational decision-makers (Dabla-Norris, 2000). The game theory provides a mathematical foundation for studying rational behaviour in competitive situations. Although some theorists of rational choice make different assumptions about the individual and proceed to larger social groups and systems, each theorist begins with the individual as the foundational unit of the theory (Dabla-Norris, 2000). In the 21st century, the rational choice theory has continued to evolve. Researchers have incorporated insights from various disciplines, including neuroscience and experimental psychology, to refine the theory. Hybrid approaches that integrate rational choice principles with behavioural insights are also becoming increasingly common and offer a more comprehensive understanding of human decision-making in diverse contexts.

3.2.3 Applying the rational choice theory to explain corruption

One of the most widely adopted definitions of corruption includes rational choice assumptions and a principal-agent perspective: the abuse of entrusted (or in some definitions, public) authority for personal, private gain (Kolstad and Søreide, 2009; Svensson, 2005). In this wording, agents are delegated responsibility for public goods provision on behalf of principals. However, instead of fulfilling their duty to the principal, agents act to realise their own preferences at the expense of the principal (Svensson, 2005). Corruption is likely to occur in situations where there are no means to determine who the agents are that have exclusive authority over goods or a service and who have discretion in making and applying the rules (Gillies, 2000). This is particularly relevant in the public sector, where government authorities (agents) often enjoy high levels of monopoly and discretionary authority over state resources and decision-making functions. As “corruption is a crime of calculation, not passion”, the ample information advantages enjoyed by government officials as rational actors provide them

with opportunities to abuse their entrusted power for private (self-interested) gain (Frank, 2005:15).

Based on the tenets of the rational choice model, competition among political parties can be deemed rational (Githongo, 2005). According to Gong (2002), every political party will always engage in activities that will ultimately lead to the realisation of their own interests regardless of pursuing democratic or other purposes of governance. From the nomination of candidature to the campaign tact and strategies, up until the conduct of the election and behaviour of voters, all these activities seem to be manipulated by political parties, either by physical or psychological methods, to bring about the achievement of the party interests first, and only then other things can follow (Gong, 2002). The rational choice criminal, just like the political party member, is self-interested and rational. Importantly, they decide to commit crime because they believe it will be fulfilling, profitable, and meet a desire or demand that non-criminal behaviour will not achieve. In the context of the current study, the rational choice theory was highly applicable because people (government officials) make decisions based on which course of action is most likely to satisfy their own needs and desires (Carling, 1992; Coleman, 1973; Heath, 1976). For instance, demanding a bribe for a service is an example of such a rational action. This means that the conscious social actor engages in deliberate and calculative strategies as the perpetrator is aware of the advantages and consequences of the behaviour.

Another feature of corruption that is explained by the rational choice theory is cost-benefit analysis. The rational choice theory posits that individuals engage in corrupt practices when the benefits of doing so outweigh the costs (Akindele, 2005). In the case of corruption, the benefits may include financial gain, power, or other forms of personal or professional advantage (Akindele, 2005). The costs, on the other hand, may include the risk of getting caught, losing one's job or reputation, or facing legal consequences (Akindele, 2005). Individuals who engage in corruption may weigh the costs and benefits and make a rational decision to engage in corrupt practices if they believe that the benefits outweigh the costs. According to Scott (2000), just like the behaviour of all animals, human behaviour is predetermined rather than free. The incentives and penalties that are experienced influence behaviour. Human instinct dictates that people act in ways that bring rewards and avoid ways that bring punishment. As a result, when engaging in corrupt acts, the offenders take care to avoid detection and use every means at their disposal. The determining factor in human

behaviour is reinforcement through rewards and punishments, which is known scientifically as ‘conditioning’ (Bandura, 1976).

Opportunity structure is also explained by the rational choice theory as it emphasises the importance of opportunity structure in shaping individual behaviour (Bardhan, 2006). In the case of corruption, the opportunity structure may include factors such as weak institutional controls, lack of transparency, or a culture of impunity (Kingston, 2007). Individuals who operate in such an environment are often likely to engage in corrupt practices because they perceive that the risks of getting caught are low and the rewards are high. Lack of accountability and integrity are closely linked to numerous well-known high profile corruption cases (Cloud, 2009). For instance, a tender contract for an environmental impact assessment in the Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality was awarded to a company operating as Milongani Eco Consulting. Due to corrupt leadership, this deal resulted in a loss of R25.6 million (Doe, 2022). Under the contract terms, Milongani was supposed to charge R350 per hour; however, within 24 hours of its appointment, the company submitted its first invoice for R1 million. According to the charge sheet, the service provider could not have completed work worth R1 million in such a short timeframe, prompting an investigation. The investigation uncovered 42 invoices totaling over R25.6 million, revealing gross financial mismanagement and corruption. This case illustrates how corruption and the abuse of procurement processes directly undermine public resources, resulting in financial loss and eroding trust in governance. Effective oversight mechanisms and stricter accountability are essential to prevent such malfeasance.

Norms and values are also explained by this theory. According to Mishra (2006), the rational choice theory recognises that social norms and values have an impact on individual conduct. For instance, if people believe that corruption is normal or acceptable in their social or professional circles, they may be more inclined to participate in corrupt activities (Mishra, 2006). Therefore, if a culture of corruption is pervasive within a particular government agency or industry, individuals who work in that setting may be more likely to engage in corrupt practices because they perceive that such behaviour is expected or even required (Rowley, 2000). Among the studies that explored the causes of corruption, several attempted through laboratory experiments, cross-national analysis, or a combination of both to prove the positive correlation between social norms and corruption. “Some studies also go further in identifying not only the positive correlation between social norms and corruption, but also those norms and cultural structures that are conducive or not to corruption” (Rowley, 2000:17).

3.2.4 Critique of the rational choice theory

Several scholars have critiqued certain shortfalls in the rational choice approach and have highlighted particular weaknesses associated with this theory (Altman, 2006). One of the primary criticisms is its assumption of human rationality under all circumstances. Altman (2006) argues that this assumption oversimplifies the intricate web of human decision-making and ignores the influence of emotions, social norms, and cognitive biases. In reality, human choices are shaped by a multitude of psychological factors, leading to decisions that often deviate from the purely rational predictions of the theory.

One model that opposes the rational choice theory is the classical theory that was introduced by Clarke and Cornish (1986). These authors aver that, while committing a crime, people are not perfectly rational and, in some cases, they are completely unreasonable. Moreover, they argue that the costs and benefits of crime are often blurred when they state: “A range of factors influence an individual’s estimate of costs and benefits of crime: self-control, moral beliefs, strains, emotional state, association with delinquent peers...” (Clarke and Cornish, 1986). In addition, many researchers have also found that the severity of punishment is far less important for some potential criminals as opposed to the certainty of punishment. Some extreme opponents of the rational choice theory even believe that people “...are not usually aware of [the] certainty and severity of punishment for the area in which they live, therefore increasing certainty of punishment may reduce crime, but the effect will be short-lived and localized” (Bicchieri, 2006:2).

Hillman (2004) asserts that, according to numerous scholars, individuals are hardly likely to be affected by the benefits of a certain crime when they are intoxicated or mentally disturbed. Many people that commit crime have very low self-control and often simply perceive the crime as ‘not wrong’. However, such individuals are likely to be discouraged from doing something illegal by the threat of punishment. Kingston (2007) suggests that the more severe the punishment is for a certain crime, the less likely it is for a jury to execute a specific sentence; therefore, it seems that, as the severity of crimes increases, the certainty of harsh sentences decreases. In fact, one may argue that severe punishment for a crime, in combination with negative experiences with law enforcement, may actually increase the likelihood of the commission of a subsequent crime. These critiques have direct implications for the current study. While Rational Choice Theory offers a useful framework for understanding how individuals may engage in corrupt practices based on perceived personal benefits, its

limitations highlight why it cannot fully explain corruption within iNdumiso Municipality. Specifically, the theory does not adequately account for systemic issues such as institutional weaknesses, entrenched political patronage, and socio-economic pressures that may constrain or shape decision-making beyond pure self-interest. In the context of iNdumiso, factors like unemployment, historical service delivery backlogs, and the influence of political networks create an environment where corruption cannot be understood solely as a series of isolated, rational calculations. Therefore, while the theory informs parts of the analysis, it must be complemented by other perspectives that consider structural and contextual drivers of corruption.

3.3 The Collective Action Theory

3.3.1 Description and main postulate of the collective action theory

The collective action theory, as applicable to the social sciences, posits that rational social actors regularly assess the actions of others to inform their own decisions to cooperate (Mayer, 2014). Although this theory is not commonly considered a criminology theory, the researcher chose it because it offers a clear explanation for the relationship between corruption and human nature. Groenendijk (1997:15) explains the main postulate of this theory as follows:

“The collective action theory emerged as an alternative explanation for why systemic corruption persists despite laws making it illegal, and why corruption resists various other anti-corruption efforts in some countries. The collective action theory goes beyond traditional principal-agent relationships and emphasizes the importance of factors such as trust and how individuals perceive the behaviour of others.”

Hence, the collective action theory recognises the importance of information sharing among group members. In corrupt systems, individuals might share information about opportunities for corruption, loopholes in regulations, or strategies to evade detection. This means that everyone begins to view corruption as the standard societal practice when it becomes the only option to accomplish certain goals. Therefore, although people are aware of the detrimental effects of pervasive corruption, they continue to act dishonestly because they feel that "it doesn't make sense to be the only honest person in a corrupt system" (Marquette and Peiffer, 2015). Olson (1965) argues that groups of individuals that attempt to serve ‘for the public good’ have difficulty doing so efficiently as they are tempted by the incentive to free-ride, or benefit from the public good, without contributing to its provision. On the other hand, individuals may also be incentivised to contribute to the public good as they will benefit from its provision regardless of whether they contribute or not (Olson, 1965).

In essence, the collective action theory examines the rationality behind individuals' decision to participate in collective actions despite potential costs or challenges (Dowding, 2013). It delves into the dynamics of group behaviour, social movements, and community actions. The theory also emphasises the interplay of individual interests, social norms, and institutional structures in shaping collective behaviour (Dowding, 2013). The theory is rooted in the rational choice paradigm as it assumes that individuals are rational actors who weigh the costs and benefits before deciding to participate in collective actions, and they engage in collective actions when

the perceive that the benefits will outweigh the costs. Olson (1965) challenges the long-held tenets of the sociological group theory which assumes that rational individuals with a common interest will necessarily act toward that common interest. “Unless the number of individuals in a group is quite small, or unless there is coercion or some other special device to make individuals act in their common interest, rational, self-interested individuals will not act to achieve their common or group interests” (Olson, 1971:2).

3.3.2 Historical background of the collective action theory

The theoretical foundations of collective action and the ‘public good’ dilemma were established in economics and political science during the mid-20th century (Blanton, 2010). The rise of industrialisation and the emergence of labour movements led to early theories about collective action. Sociologists like Emile Durkheim explored the dynamics of social solidarity and how individuals come together in societies, while economists like Mancur Olson (1965) explored the challenges of collective action, emphasising the tendency for individuals to free-ride rather than contribute to the public good. Blanton (2010) acknowledges that political scientists also contributed by examining issues related to collective decision-making and cooperation in various contexts. The collective action theory has found many applications in political science, sociology, communication, anthropology, and environmentalism. Researchers van Zomeren, Postmes, and Spears (2008) conducted a meta-analysis of over 180 studies of collective action in an attempt to integrate three dominant socio-psychological perspectives that explain antecedent conditions in this phenomenon, namely injustice, efficacy, and identity. During the 1980s, scholars started to critically examine the assumptions of earlier collective action theories (Bauhr and Nasiritousi, 2011). Elinor Ostrom, an economist, contributed significantly by challenging the notion of the tragedy of the commons. She studied how communities manage common pool resources through cooperation and developed the concept of ‘common-pool resources’ (Bauhr and Nasiritousi, 2011).

3.3.3 Applicability of the collective action theory to explain corruption

It was in the late 20th century and early 21st century that scholars began to apply the collective action theory to the study of corruption. According to Carballo, Roscoe, and Feinman (2014), researchers started to analyse corruption as a collective action problem, arguing that individuals, including public officials and citizens, face dilemmas about whether to cooperate (act honestly) or defect (engage in corrupt practices). Corruption often arises in situations where multiple individuals in a system (public officials, bureaucrats, politicians) need to

coordinate their actions. The collective action theory thus suggests that when these individuals face challenges in coordinating their efforts to achieve a common goal (e.g., personal gain), they might resort to corrupt practices as a way to overcome these coordination problems (Bauhr and Nasiritousi, 2011). Therefore, corruption in the government sphere can be explained by using the collective action theory (Hough, 2013). According to this theory, when corruption is widespread and accepted as part of ‘the informal rules of the game’, such practices will persist due to a lack of collective action. In such an environment, it can be difficult for individuals to trust one another enough to coordinate anti-corruption efforts (Blanton, 2010). To combat corruption in these circumstances, there is a need for collective and coordinated approaches, such as reform coalitions or proactive alliances of likeminded people. These approaches are often referred to as ‘collective action’ (Hough, 2013). The collective action theory also emphasises the importance of trust and explores how individuals perceive the behaviour of others. Thus, in an environment where everyone is believed to be engaging in corruption, it can be difficult for individuals to trust one another enough to coordinate anti-corruption efforts (Booth and Cammack, 2013).

3.3.4 The ‘free rider’ problem

The free rider problem is a concept that is associated with the collective action theory, particularly in economics and political science. It refers to a situation where individuals benefit from the collective good without having to pay their fair share of the cost for its production (Carballo, Roscoe, and Feinman, 2014). In other words, individuals can enjoy the benefits of a collective action, such as clean air, public safety, or social movements, even if they do not contribute to its creation or maintenance (Cox, 2014). In the context of corruption, the free rider problem is also prevalent. If a few individuals in the public sector engage in corrupt practices (e.g., taking bribes, embezzling funds), they benefit individually (Cox, 2014). However, if everyone in the system acts in this way, the collective public good (effective governance, public trust) is compromised (Dowding, 2013). Despite this, individuals might still engage in corrupt acts because they believe others are doing it too and their small contribution won't change the overall situation. Hence, corruption is the manifestation of free riding, as the motivation for engaging in corrupt behaviour is usually depicted as coming from putting personal interest ahead of the larger group's collective interest (Rao, 2013). The group's collective benefit, in this case, can be conceptualised as being either abstract or quite concrete. In the case of the former, the choice to engage in corruption robs the group from having a corruption-free environment, or good quality governance.

3.3.5 Incentives and deterrence

The collective action theory highlights the importance of incentives as corruption often thrives in environments where individuals have strong incentives to engage in corrupt practices (Ostrom, 2007). These incentives can include financial gain, job security, career advancement, and access to resources or services. When the potential benefits of corruption outweigh the risks, individuals may be motivated to engage in corrupt activities. In corrupt systems, if there are insufficient incentives for individuals to act honestly and resist corruption, they might succumb to prevailing corrupt practices (Persson, Rothstein, and Teorell, 2013). Additionally, if the deterrence mechanisms (punishments for corruption) are weak, the temptation to engage in corruption collectively increases (Fargher and Espinoza, 2016). To encourage collective action, there must be selective incentives that motivate individuals to participate. These incentives can be material (such as economic rewards), social (such as recognition or status), or moral (adopting values and beliefs). Selective incentives help overcome the free rider problem, where individuals benefit from collective actions without contributing to them (Gauri, Woolcock, and Desai, 2011).

3.3.6 Institutional design

The collective action theory emphasises the importance of proper institutional design. If institutions lack transparency, accountability, and fairness, collective action might lead to corruption (Persson, Rothstein, and Teorell, 2013). Properly designed institutions, on the other hand, can align individual and collective interests toward non-corrupt behaviour (Blanton and Fargher, 2012). According to Ostrom (2005), the relationship between corruption and institutional design is a critical aspect of governance and public administration. Mayer (2014) defines institutions as the formal and informal rules, structures, and practices that shape human interactions, including those within government bodies. Corruption, on the other hand, involves the misuse of public power for private gain, which can erode the effectiveness and legitimacy of institutions (Mayer, 2014). Corruption is closely related to a country's institutional structure and is a form of governance failure (Hough, 2013). In a country with no inclusive institutions, there are many negative economic consequences because the institutional structure is not transparent and accountable. Hence, rent-seeking activities develop, the quality of bureaucracy is low, and the service is based on the desires of a particular interest groups instead of the general public (Rao, 2013). This suggests that transparent and accountable institutions are less prone to corruption (Booth and Cammack, 2013). Institutional designs that promote openness,

disclosure of information, and mechanisms for public oversight create a hostile environment for corrupt practices. For instance, institutions that regularly publish financial reports and conduct audits provide fewer opportunities for corruption to go unnoticed (Booth and Cammack, 2013). Dreher et al. (2009) explored the relationship between institutional quality, corruption, and the informal economy, and their study examined different empirical models of between 78-135 countries. According to the findings, institutional quality increases corruption and the informal economy, while reduced corruption requires the government to be as effective as possible by ensuring and sustaining institutional quality.

3.3.7 Norms and social capital

The collective action theory also considers social norms and social capital. In environments where corruption is normalised, individuals might engage in corrupt practices to conform to social expectations, even if personally they might not want to (Bauhr and Nasiritousi, 2011). Norms are unwritten social rules that guide behaviour within a society. When there are strong societal norms against corruption, individuals are less likely to engage in corrupt practices. Moreover, norms against corruption can create a social environment where corrupt behaviour is stigmatised, making it less acceptable and prevalent. However, in societies where corruption is normalised, corrupt practices can become ingrained in social norms (Bauhr and Nasiritousi, 2011). This normalisation can lead to a vicious cycle where corruption becomes self-perpetuating. Norms such as accepting bribes, favouritism, or other forms of corruption can weaken the social fabric and erode trust among citizens. Moreover, social capital, the networks and relationships within a society, can influence corruption (Bauhr and Nasiritousi, 2011). If a society's social capital is low, it can foster corruption as individuals might not trust others enough to engage in transparent, non-corrupt activities, and therefore social norms and social capital can mutually reinforce each other (Cook, Hardin, and Levi, 2005). Strong social norms against corruption can enhance social capital by fostering trust and cooperation while high social capital can also reinforce anti-corruption norms, creating a positive feedback loop where trust and integrity prevail. Strong social norms against corruption and high social capital can therefore act as powerful deterrents against corrupt practices (Cook, Hardin, and Levi, 2005). These elements promote trust, cooperation, and social control.

3.3.8 Critique of the collective action theory

Although the theory has its merits, there are several critiques against it. The collective action theory assumes that individuals are rational actors who weigh the costs and benefits of their

actions (Gauri, Woolcock, and Desai, 2011), but Hickey and du Toit (2013) argue that this assumption of the collective action theory oversimplifies human behaviour as people's decisions are influenced by a wide range of factors such as their emotional state, social norms, and cultural values. Olson explored the provision of public goods by groups and focused on the non-excludability property of public goods and thus, with the term collective action problem he mainly referred to the free rider problem in the organization of interests (Olson 1965). Thereafter, collective action problems have mostly been identified with social dilemmas; that is, situations where rational individual actors are trapped to collectively produce sub-optimal results in terms of aggregated welfare (Gauri, Woolcock, and Desai, 2011).

One of the central challenges addressed by the collective action theory is the free rider problem, which occurs when individuals benefit from 'the collective good' without contributing to its provision. Arce, Sandler, and Todd (2001) argue that this problem is not as pervasive as the theory suggests, as many collective actions involve coercion, social pressure, or selective incentives to encourage participation. The collective action theory therefore does not always adequately address the power dynamics within groups (Carballo, Roscoe, and Feinman, 2014). Power imbalances can significantly influence decision-making processes, resource allocation, and the overall effectiveness of collective action efforts, and ignoring these power dynamics can lead to unequal participation and outcomes (Carballo, Roscoe, and Feinman, 2014).

3.4 Chapter Summary

Exploring and understanding the theoretical framework served as a conceptual anchor for the research as the rational choice theory and the collective action theory illuminated various aspects of corruption and its manifestations. By critically examining their principles, assumptions, and limitations, these theories prepared the groundwork for the empirical investigation as they guided the study towards a deeper understanding of the intricate interplay between individual rationality and collective cooperation. This chapter thus illustrated how the theories of collective action and rational choice interact in a complex way when it comes to corruption. The chapter provided insightful information by acknowledging the reasonable decisions made by individuals and comprehending the cooperative dynamics inside corrupt networks. To fully understand the complex nature of corruption, the discourse also emphasised the necessity for a holistic approach to an exploration of corruption, including social aspects, institutional analyses, and psychological insights. This complex perspective directed the

research towards a deeper examination of corruption and its societal ramifications, and the outcomes will pave the way for further empirical studies in this field.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodologies that were utilised to conduct this study. According to Bryman (2005:95), “research methodology is the specific procedures or techniques used to identify, select, process, and analyse information about a topic”. The discourse in this chapter will enable the reader to assess the overall validity and reliability of the study (Bryman, 2005). The chapter provides a detailed analysis of the research design this study employed as well as evidence that justifies the choice of this design. It outlines the sampling method used and establishes the procedures for data collection as well as data analysis, management, and interpretation. Finally, it discusses the ethical considerations and acknowledges the study limitations.

The research methodology selected comprises many approaches to perform research and elicit findings regarding the subject of inquiry. Research technique, according to Neuman (2003), is a tool that converts social research into scientific information; as such, it is essential to select appropriate research procedures. This chapter will show how the researcher used the qualitative approach to achieve the study's goals and objectives. Every research project needs a clear design that specifies how data will be gathered and analysed (Maxfield and Babbie, 2008). This study utilised the purposive sampling method and conducted in-depth interviews with selected participants. Thematic data analysis was employed to elicit and evaluate the themes that emerged from the data.

4.2 Research Methodology

“A research methodology is the specific techniques for collecting and analysing data in order to uncover new information. The research methodology [is the] strategy by which the researcher can plot out a systemic process to understand a phenomenon” (Bryman, 2005:19). When trying to understand a problem or phenomenon, different methods must be used depending on the data available and how relevant the information may be (Bhandari, 2020). There are three different types of research methodologies, namely the quantitative, qualitative, and the mixed methods research methodologies. Qualitative research involves collecting and analysing non-numerical data (e.g., text, visuals, or audio recordings) to understand concepts,

opinions, and experiences. This approach may be used to gather in-depth insights into a problem or generate new ideas for research (Bhandari, 2020). Qualitative research refers to investigative research (Neuman, 2014), hence a qualitative research design was utilised for this study. The use of qualitative methods allowed a wide range of responses by the participants which generated a significant set of data for analysis (Creswell, 2015). In essence, by analysing the data and looking deeper into the research problem, the qualitative approach assisted the researcher to discover new perspectives based on individuals' views.

Because corruption associated with service delivery is influenced by contextual factors (such as cultural norms, social structures, and historical dynamics), qualitative research methods enabled the researcher to contextualize these factors and to understand how they shaped behaviours and outcomes. The qualitative research approach also focused on events that transpired and on the outcomes of those events from the authentic perspectives of the participants (Creswell, 2015). Figure 4.1 illustrates the specific procedures that were followed to identify, select, process, and analyse information about the topic under investigation.

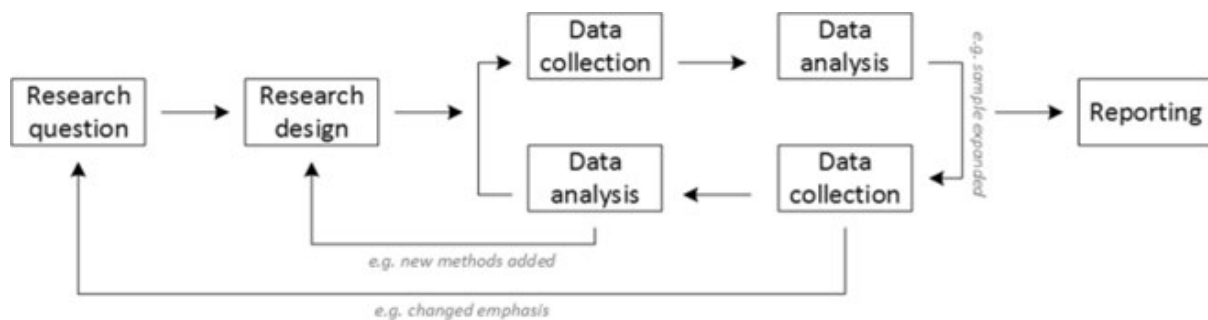


Figure 4.1: Procedures to identify, select, process, and analyse information

Source: Researchgate, (2024)

4.3 Research Paradigm

A research paradigm is a philosophical framework that underpins the research. It offers a pattern of beliefs and understandings from which the theories and practices of the research project operate (Creswell, 1994). The researcher chose an interpretive paradigm, because she took into account the study's qualitative methodology as well as its ontology and epistemology. The paradigm informing the research also had an effect on the purpose of the research as the paradigm indicated what type of questions had to be asked about the topic and ensured that these questions were answered. This approach is supported by Durheim (2006), who states that although the paradigm does not directly define the purpose of the research, it provides a guiding

framework to achieve the purpose of the research. An interpretive research paradigm is rooted in the belief that social reality is constructed through the perceptions and interactions of individuals, and it seeks to understand the meaning and significance that people attach to their experiences (Marshall and Rossman, 2014). Adopting an interpretive research paradigm for this study facilitated the uncovering of intricate connections between corruption and service delivery, and elucidated a holistic and human-centred understanding of the intricate issues associated with these phenomena. Interpretive research thus allowed the researcher to delve deeply into the subjective experiences and perspectives of various stakeholders, namely citizens, public officials, and service providers. This also helped the researcher to uncover the underlying motivations, attitudes, and beliefs that influence behaviours related to corruption and service delivery.

Interpretivism, similar to other paradigms, has a unique and distinct view of the world and of how the world should be understood. Interpretivism does not accept reality as it appears at face-value; instead, this paradigm claims that reality consists of people's subjective experiences of the external world (Terre Blanche and Durrheim, 2006). This means that a world which is shared by everyone is experienced differently by everyone as each individual applies their own unique perspectives and meanings to their experiences and actions. In order to understand this type of reality, the patterns and problems that shaped reality and even solutions to these problems had to be unearthed. In brief, interpretivism proposes that such qualitative research should explore people's subjective experiences and actions and the meanings or reasons they attach to these actions and experiences (IvyPanda, 2020).

To conduct research through the lens of the interpretivist paradigm, the researcher had to take a unique stance in relation to reality and the subjects participating in the research. This required the researcher to be open and empathetic (IvyPanda, 2020) in order to view the beliefs and experiences of the subjects as they themselves would view or experience them. Therefore, the use of empathy allowed the researcher to fully understand the individuals' subjective experiences and the meanings they attached to those experiences. Thus, a subjective relationship between the researcher and the participants was created which allowed the researcher to interpret the data at a deep, involved level and to form ideas from the interpretations in a mutually constructed manner (Mottier, 2005).

Pollard (2002:38) argues that interpretive researchers see themselves “within the circle” to interpret the world around them. They adopt an epistemological position of someone who co-creates and shares knowledge, and they create relationships that enhance their understanding of different points of view. Such research is subjective, as the results can be influenced by the opinions of the researcher. Moreover, data generation elicits rich, qualitative data, although quantitative data can also be collected (Pollard 2002). Researchers using the interpretive paradigm typically rely on in-depth interviews, participant observation, and other qualitative methods to gather rich and nuanced data. To explore the corruption phenomenon, the researcher conducted interviews with various stakeholders (local government officials, employees, residents, and community leaders) to capture their diverse perspectives on corruption, as proposed by Marshall and Rossman (2014). Interpretive researchers are often reflexive about their own biases and perspectives and they need to acknowledge that their background and experiences might influence the interpretation of the data. Therefore, the researcher consciously remained transparent about her own position and biases to ensure that she critically reflected on her role in shaping the research process and findings.

4.4 Profile of iNdumiso Municipality

This critical investigation into corruption and its impact on service delivery employed a case study approach that focused on the iNdumiso municipality. This municipality is located in the northern region of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. It is a local municipality that falls under the Zululand District Municipality. This municipality comprises of many settlements, both rural and urban. The municipality is characterised by diverse communities of various ethnic groups, but the majority of the residents are of African descent. The municipality is split into 23 Wards and its geographical area covers an estimated at 4 185 km² in extent, making it one of the spatially largest municipalities in the province. It is populated by approximately 243 795 people (Community Survey, 2016). The population has been growing steadily since 2011 from 211 060 to 243 795 people in 2016, thus recording an increase of 32 735 people over this 5-year period. The municipality is responsible for delivering essential services such as water, sanitation, electricity, waste management, and transportation. The area is populated by a diverse society which faces various social, economic, environmental, and governance challenges. As a result, the municipality should honour its mandate and strive to address these challenges, which means meeting the needs of an ever-increasing population.

4.5 Research Design

4.5.1 An exploratory research design

“Design is a logical progression of stages or tasks, from problem formulation to the generation of conclusions or theory, that are necessary in planning or carrying out a study” (Maxwell and Babbie, 2016:214). According to Zikmund et al. (2013), a research design is a ground-breaking strategy that indicates the strategies and practices for gathering and investigating the required data. It entails a structure or plan of action for the research and has a vital impact on the unwavering quality of the outcomes that are achieved. Therefore, it provides a strong base for the entire research and considers the smooth integration of various research operations (Universalteacher.com, 2017). Maxwell and Babbie (2008:117) state that “design is a logical progression of stages or tasks, from problem formulation to the generation of conclusions or theory, that are necessary in planning or carrying out a study”. This study adopted a qualitative case study research design.

The research design that this study adopted was an explorative case study, as explained by Neuman (2014). Exploratory research is conducted to address an issue that is not yet well understood and to gain a deeper comprehension of the research issue under study, but it won't produce definitive findings. Exploratory research is frequently employed when a researcher wants to delve further into a complex or understudied subject in order to produce insights that could direct future studies or inform prospective treatments. This notion aligned with the research goal which was to comprehensively examine the impact of corruption on service delivery in a selected municipality. A thorough investigation of the complicated and varied factors that determined why and how corruption affected service delivery was therefore necessary. In this research, the case is iNdumiso Municipality, a local municipality in KwaZulu-Natal that has been identified in oversight and media reports as facing persistent governance and service delivery challenges. The case study design allowed the researcher to collect rich, qualitative data from multiple sources including interviews, municipal documents, Auditor-General reports, and media investigations to explore the nature, drivers, and impacts of corruption within a single, bounded context. This approach aligns with the study's objectives, particularly the exploration of local perceptions and the identification of corruption forms and drivers specific to iNdumiso.

4.5.2 The case study design

One particularly effective strategy for achieving this depth of understanding is the utilisation of the case study as a method of inquiry (Yin, 2018). A key characteristic of the case study method is its ability to facilitate a comprehensive exploration of a specific case or cases. Unlike broader research designs, the case study allows for a detailed examination of the intricacies inherent in the phenomenon under investigation in a narrow context. This depth of exploration is invaluable in uncovering the nuances that may be overlooked in more generalised research approaches. “A case study research design focuses on the acquisition of astute insight into the views of a small number of participants who possess knowledge about and insight into a

specific phenomenon” (Naicker, 2021:17). Case studies are particularly adept at providing a contextual understanding of the subject matter. By delving into the specifics of a particular case, researchers can unravel the layers of context that influence and shape the phenomenon. This is crucial when aiming to understand how and why certain events or processes unfold within a distinct setting, such as a local municipality grappling with corruption. This research design was thus useful as it addressed the rationale for conducting this study whose purpose was to explore the relationship between corruption and service delivery in the iNdumiso Municipality. Engaging with municipal workers and community members residing in this municipality thus generated complex narratives that illuminated their perceptions on the extent to which the level of corruption affected service delivery.

iNdumiso Municipality is located within the Zululand District in northern KwaZulu-Natal, serving an estimated population of over 240,000 residents. It comprises both rural villages and small urban centres, with service delivery responsibilities in areas such as water provision, road maintenance, housing, and waste management. The municipality has been cited in the Auditor-General’s 2021/2022 report for irregular expenditure amounting to R48 million, linked to non-compliance with the Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA). Local media investigations (Ngcobo, 2022; Mhlongo, 2023) have reported incomplete road projects, stalled housing developments, and allegations of nepotism in procurement processes. These factors made iNdumiso an appropriate and relevant case through which to investigate the relationship between corruption and service delivery.

4.6 Sampling Methods

4.6.1 Sampling procedures

A sample design is a definite plan for obtaining a sample from a given population and refers to the technique/s the researcher uses to select subjects for the sample. The sample design also entails the procedure to determine the number of subjects to be included in the sample. Hence, sample design is determined before the collection of the data commences. The researcher selected subjects that would be reliable and whose knowledge and experiences would generate data that would address the research questions and objectives. Neuman (2014) states that sampling in qualitative research allows the researcher to carefully choose individual cases or units and regard them as representatives of various aspects or features of the social world under study.

In qualitative research, a population's subset (or sample) is chosen for each study. According to Turner (2020:8), "sampling is the selection of a subset of the population of interest in a research study". In this study, a purposive sampling method was utilised to select relevant participants that would provide in-depth and detailed information about the phenomenon under investigation. The sample comprised employees of the iNdumiso Municipality and community members.

4.6.2 Non-probability sampling

A non-probability purposive sampling technique was used to recruit 15 participants for the study. Qualitative samples are purposive, and that is why they are selected by virtue of their

capacity to provide richly textured information that will be relevant to the phenomenon under investigation. The relatively small sample size was therefore appropriate. Participants of both genders and various ages were selected.

4.6.3 Recruitment strategies

Recruiting participants that will willingly participate in a research study can be challenging, yet choosing the right kind of candidates is important for desirable research outcomes (Spratling, 2013; Newington and Metcalfe, 2014). Furthermore, appropriate recruitment influences the trustworthiness of qualitative research (Jessiman, 2013). Recruitment cannot begin without the expressed approval of gatekeepers, or those who control access to potential participants and research sites (Lysaght et al., 2016). Therefore, to recruit participants for this study, the researcher sought approval from a gatekeeper in the iNdumiso Municipality and an ethical approval letter from the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) of the relevant university. After receiving these approval letters, the researcher was assisted in accessing suitable municipal participants. The researcher also requested and received a gatekeeper's letter from a local councillor to interview local residents.

4.6.4 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria for municipal workers:

- Municipal worker/manager in the service delivery sector in the iNdumiso Municipality area;
- At least 4-5 years' work experience in this municipality;
- Have an understanding of who is responsible for service delivery and how the process of service delivery works; and
- Willing and available to participate in the interviews.

Exclusion criteria for municipal workers:

- Work experience of fewer than 3 years;
- Not an employee of the iNdumiso Municipality;
- Does not understand who is responsible for service delivery and how the process of service delivery works; and
- Unwilling to participate in the study.

Inclusion criteria for community members:

- Should be 18 years or older to provide informed consent;
- Be a current resident in the iNdumiso Municipality area with relevant experiences and perspectives; and
- Willing to provide informed consent and to be interviewed.

Exclusion criteria for community members:

- Individuals who do not reside in iNdumiso Municipality; and
- People below the age of 18.

4.7 Data Collection

4.7.1 Primary and secondary data collection

Data collection is “the process of gathering and analysing accurate data from various sources to find answers to research problems, trends, and probabilities [and] to evaluate possible outcomes” (Shaw, 1999:65). It is a crucial stage in many kinds of study and leads to data analysis and decision-making (Shaw, 1999). This study employed a qualitative research strategy, meaning that the data were gathered and analysed using qualitative research techniques. When the study is exploratory in nature, qualitative techniques for data collection usually focus on learning and identifying the underlying reasons of a phenomenon through in-depth investigation.

In such research, both primary and secondary sources of data are important; hence, the researcher utilised both types of data to strengthen the validity and reliability of the empirical findings. Secondary sources were used to enrich the analysis and restatement of primary sources (George, 2023). Thus, the researcher reviewed journal articles, reviews, and academic theses to address some of the research objectives (Cresswell, 2014). Secondary sources tend to be works that summarise, interpret, reorganise, or otherwise provide added value to a primary set of data. Secondary data collection involves using existing data that were collected by someone else for a purpose different from the original intent, and researchers analyse and interpret these data to extract relevant information (QuestionPro, 2022). Secondary data can be obtained from various sources, including published articles, online databases, government and institutional records, and past research studies (QuestionPro, 2022). Corruption is a very broad

concept which has been studied by different authors, therefore using secondary data about corruption helped the researcher understand the depth of corruption and decide on possible research techniques.

Primary data were collected by means of interviews using a semi-structured interview schedule to direct the questions posed during the interviews (Largan and Morris, 2019). Primary data collection involved the collection of original data directly from the interview participants. This method allowed the researcher to obtain first-hand information that was specifically tailored to the research objectives (Marshall and Rossman, 2014). Although various techniques for primary data collection are available (survey questionnaires, interviews, experiments, and observations), semi-structured interviews were the primary data collection method used in this study (Marshall and Rossman, 2014), and this process involved 18 participants.

Secondary data was used to complement primary interview data and to provide factual, documentary evidence of corruption and service delivery issues in iNdumiso Municipality. This secondary data included Auditor-General reports, municipal annual performance plans, policy documents, and credible media articles.

The selection of secondary data followed specific criteria:

Relevance: Only documents directly related to iNdumiso Municipality or municipal corruption/service delivery in KwaZulu-Natal were included.

Credibility: Sources had to be produced by recognised oversight bodies (e.g., Auditor-General South Africa), government institutions, reputable research organisations, or established news outlets.

Time frame: Documents published between 2015 and 2023 were prioritised to ensure recency and relevance.

Corroboration: Wherever possible, findings from one source were cross-checked with at least one other source to improve reliability.

These measures ensured that the secondary data was both contextually relevant and methodologically rigorous, strengthening the overall validity of the study's findings.

4.7.2 Semi-structured in-depth interviews

An interview is a conversation between two or more people, and in research the purpose of the

interviewer is to ask questions to obtain information from the interviewee (Guest, Namey, and Mitchell, 2012). Interviews can be flexible or inflexible depending on the freedom required to investigate the issue under study. According to Guest, Namey, and Mitchell (2012), the interview can be semi-structured (questions are open-ended) or structured (questions restrict how participants can respond) (Anney, 2014). Semi-structured interviews generate in-depth data as they utilise pre-set questions that allow open-ended responses (Creswell, 2009). In the current study, using open-ended, semi-structured questions allowed the researcher to delve deeper into the responses through probing. This elicited insightful information and even addressed issues that had not previously been considered. A pre-designed questionnaire would not have been helpful because it would not have allowed the participants to express their actual emotions or given them an opportunity to explain how they made sense of their world (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

4.8 Thematic Data Analysis

The aim of data analysis is to enable outcomes that “make connections, identify patterns and contribute to greater understanding” (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992:146). Data analysis is a process whereby data are broken down into their significant components. Moreover, data analysis involves the arranging, sifting, and examining of data to find patterns and associations among them (Mchunu, 2018). Furthermore, Rose and Sullivan (1993:6) note that data analysis “is

concerned with explaining variance [and] why there is variability in some particular characteristic in a population or sample, which is of theoretical importance to social researchers”. There are various qualitative data analysis methods that social scientists utilise to analyse and interpret textual data, but this study employed thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method of analysing qualitative data. It is usually applied to a set of texts, such as interview transcripts. The researcher thus closely examined the data to identify common themes; i.e., topics, ideas, and patterns of meaning that recurred repeatedly (Zhang and Wildemuth, 2009). Therefore, the use of thematic content analysis was used to reduce and simplify the data for effective analysis. Moreover, thematic content analysis allowed the researcher to structure the qualitative data to achieve the research objectives.

Thematic analysis differs from other analytical methods that seek to describe patterns across qualitative data and that do not require the detailed theoretical and technological knowledge of approaches such as grounded theory, interpretive phenomenological analysis, and thematic decomposition analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). According to Babbie and Mouton (2001), by using thematic content analysis, the researcher is able to categorise the data into themes and sub-themes to render them meaningful and comparable. The thematic content analysis approach was particularly suited to the study as it facilitated answering the classical questions of what, why, and to whom the phenomenon being studied had significant effects (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). Thematic analysis is also adaptable as it can offer a comprehensive, intricate, and multifaceted explanation of data because of its theoretical flexibility (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is a method that can be realist or essentialist as it can be used to report participants’ experiences, meanings, and reality; or, it can be constructionist as it can be used to examine how various discourses that operate within society affect events, realities, meanings, experiences, and so forth (Braun and Clark, 2006).

4.8.1 Familiarisation

Once data have been collected, the researcher must become familiar with the entire set. This step involves “transcribing the data, reading and re-reading the data, and noting down the initial ideas” (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Major ideas are highlighted and written down for each transcribed section. This process enables researchers to thoroughly familiarise themselves with the collected data and to identify key terms that form key themes and ideas. Immersion in the data involves reading the transcripts, listening to audio and video tapes, and perusing observational notes and their translation to ensure data reduction (Ritchie and Spencer, 2002).

During the familiarisation stage, the researcher gains an overview of the diversity of the data to have a better understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

4.8.2 Generating initial codes

This process involves “coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, [and] collecting data relevant to each code” (Braun and Clarke, 2006:87). Therefore, while translating the conversations and transcribing them, certain features were coded as small phrases or keywords that represented specific ideas. Memos were also written to keep track of the condensed information. This was a classification process whereby the data were arranged and sifted. At this stage, the researcher developed passages of the raw data that collated ideas, phrases, and clauses that could represent specific themes. These textual passages were taken from the interview transcripts. This process enabled the researcher to identify the coding units (units of analysis) from which a coding frame was set up in accordance with the codes assigned to the sections of the text (Ritchie and Spencer, 2002). Stuckey (2015:7) notes that “codes are used to retrieve and categorise data that are similar in meaning so the researcher can quickly find and cluster the segments that relate to one another”.

4.8.3 Searching for themes across the data

Themes were identified by “collating codes into potential themes; [thus], by gathering all data relevant to each potential theme” (Braun and Clarke, 2006:87). The data were read and re-read and the cycle was repeated several times to narrow down the number of codes and categorise them into identifiable themes. The codes that were then analysed and grouped into central themes will be presented in the next chapter.

4.8.4 Reviewing and finalising the themes

The process involved “checking if the themes work[ed] in relation to the coded extracts at the first level and then the entire data set at the second level [and then] generating a thematic map of the analysis” (Braun and Clarke, 2006:87). The complete interview data set was re-read to validate the coded map. This step entailed making sense of the identified themes or categories and their properties (Krippendorff, 2011). At this point, the researcher drew conclusions and considered some reconstructed meanings from the data. Moreover, the researcher explored the properties and dimensions of the categories, established connections among these categories, discovered patterns, and tested these categories against the entire data set, as proposed by Bradley (1993).

4.8.5 Producing the report

Finally, the researcher engaged in writing the report. This entailed the selection of vivid, compelling excerpts, the final analysis of these selected extracts, and relating them to the research questions and the literature to produce a scholarly report of the analysed data (Braun and Clarke, 2006:87). Several vital statements representing the data were extracted to showcase the resulting outcomes as statements in the form of ideas and conclusions, as well as textual arguments of the interconnection among the codes. The researcher also reported on the decisions and the application of the coding procedure that was utilised to establish the dependability and credibility of the study. At this point, the researcher used her own discretion in presenting the findings, while ensuring that there was a balance between the descriptions and the interpretations (Nowell et al., 2017).

4.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations in research are contained in a set of principles that guide the research design and practices (Bryman and Bell, 2007). These principles include voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, and avoiding the potential for harm. Research ethics matter for scientific integrity, human rights and dignity, and collaboration between science and society (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2012). Adhering to these principles ensures that participation in studies is voluntary, informed, and safe for research subjects. For this study, the researcher obtained the informed consent of all the participants before their involvement. The purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits of the study and the participants' right to withdraw at any time without repercussions were explained. In cases where the participants might face potential harm, such as speaking out against corruption, the confidentiality of their participation and the anonymity of their responses were highlighted (Bryman and Bell, 2007). A pseudonym was therefore allocated to each participant to maintain their anonymity. The data were stored securely with authorised access only to the researcher and the supervisor. The researcher provided an accurate and transparent description of the research goals, funding sources, and affiliations to establish trust with the participants. Access to the participants was obtained through gatekeepers to ensure that their involvement was transparent and that any decision was aligned with the best interests of the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Before providing their informed consent, the participants were aware of the purpose of the study, any possible risks, and how their information would be used. This preserved moral principles and honoured people's right to autonomy (Baez, 2002). Moreover,

by providing a comprehensive explanation of the study's goals, methods for gathering and analysing the data, and the anticipated results, transparency and trust were fostered. As the participants were allowed to decide for themselves whether or not to participate, those who chose to participate were actively engaged and produced high-quality data.

4.10 Limitations of the Study

While this study was able to explore the nature and effects of corruption on service delivery as set out in the objectives, it also had limitations.

Imposed restrictions on information sharing: The first major limitation was that some targeted research participants might not have provided all the relevant information due an information restriction imposed by the municipality, while some might have feared exposing themselves to the public.

Small sample size: The small sample size made it difficult to determine if a particular outcome was a true finding.

Access to data: Limited access to accurate and comprehensive data on corruption and service delivery was a significant challenge. Some data were incomplete, inconsistent, and difficult to obtain, which affected the depth and reliability of the study findings.

Bias and subjectivity: Studying corruption and its impact on service delivery was inherently subjective and prone to bias. The researcher thus faced challenges in obtaining unbiased responses and this posed a challenge in objectively measuring the impact of corruption on service delivery.

External validity: The findings on corruption and service delivery in this single municipality may not be generalised to other locations or contexts due to the limited scope of the study. The specific circumstances of this municipality thus limited the broader applicability of the research findings to others.

4.11 Research Quality and Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness, or the rigor of a study, refers to the degree of confidence in the data, the manner of interpretation, and the methods used to ensure the quality of the study (Pilot and

Beck, 2014). In each study, the researcher should establish the protocols and procedures necessary for it to be considered worthy of consideration by readers and other scholars (Amankwaa, 2016). The researcher thus ensured that the current study's credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability were ensured.

4.11.1 Credibility

To achieve credibility, the results of a study must be deemed credible from the perspective of the participants (Korstjens and Moser,2018). The researcher thus shared the research findings with the participants to ensure that their perspectives were accurately represented. This process allowed the participants to provide feedback and suggest corrections, which added to the validity of the interpretations.

4.11.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of a qualitative research study can be generalised or transferred to other contexts or settings (Korstjens and Moser,2018). From a qualitative perspective, transferability is primarily the responsibility of the qualitative researcher to clearly describe the research context and the assumptions that are central to the research (Korstjens and Moser, 2018). In this study, transferability was supported by providing a detailed description of the research context, participants, and the assumptions underpinning the study, enabling readers to determine whether the findings could be relevant to other settings.

4.11.3 Dependability

To achieve dependability, the researcher must account for the ever-changing context within which the research occurred (Korstjens and Moser, 2018). The researcher thus describes the changes that occurred in the setting in this report and explains how these changes affected the way in which the study was approached. To ensure dependability, the researcher also kept detailed records of the research process, the decisions made, the data collection procedures, and the analytical steps. This will allow others to follow the research journey and verify the dependability of the study's findings.

4.11.4 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the results may be confirmed or corroborated by others (Korstjens and Moser, 2018). Several strategies may be used to enhance confirmability,

but in this study the researcher carefully documented the procedures for checking and

rechecking the data throughout the study. Moreover, the research processes, findings, and interpretations were discussed with colleagues and study peers who were familiar with the research topic. Their inputs provided external perspectives and contributed to the confirmability of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

4.12 Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed how the qualitative research strategy and pertinent methods were used to accomplish the study's objectives and ultimate goal. It also provided a detailed description of the research design that was employed as well as the study's geographic environment. Additionally, the methods and procedures for collecting data were explained, along with the sample strategy and methods to ensure the trustworthiness of the study. The strategies for gathering data were designed to address the goals of the investigation and to provide answers to the research questions. This chapter also discussed the ethical issues that were adhered to and acknowledged the study's scope as a limitation.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRATION AND DISCUSSION.

5.1 Introduction

The most critical phases of any research are the data collection and analysis processes. Thematic data analysis is a widely used qualitative research technique that is used to compress gathered information (Martin, 2008). It entails the analysis of the acquired data using logical and analytical reasoning to spot trends, correlations, and patterns. According to LeCompte and Schensul (2005), data analysis is a procedure used by researchers to turn data into a narrative and then to analyse these texts to reach conclusions. This chapter presents the data and the textual analyses and interpretations flowing from the interview responses of recruited municipality workers and community members. The results emerging from the thematic analysis process are presented and the findings reveal the participants' experiences and perceptions of corruption associated with service delivery, the challenges faced by municipality workers in delivering these services, and the roles of municipal management and community members to prevent corruption. The findings are consistent with those of previous researchers who also explored corruption in service delivery, and highlight the need for transparency, accountability, and community engagement to improve service delivery and curb corrupt practices in this sphere. This chapter provides a detailed analysis of the data and interprets the findings in the context of the research questions and objectives.

The researcher initially transcribed the interviews in the original language (isiZulu) in which the interviews were conducted, and then translated the transcriptions into English. The researcher then objectively interpreted the data. The participants are referred to by pseudonyms for ethical purposes, such as M1 (municipal participant 1) and C1 (community participant 1). The data that emerged from the interviews are linked to the literature in the discourse to verify current findings and to address the objectives of the study.

Comprehensive analyses of the qualitative data that were collected from two distinct sets of participants are presented. The first group was the community members and the second the municipal workers. Each group offered unique insights into the impact of corruption on service delivery in the municipality under study. The discourse first examines the perceptions and

experiences of the community members, followed by an exploration of the views articulated by the municipal workers.

The themes that emerged were in line with the following objectives:

1. Explore community members' and municipal employees' perceptions of how corruption influences service delivery in the study area;
2. Identify and describe the forms of corruption perceived to affect service delivery in the municipality.;
3. To investigate the key drivers of corruption in the iNdumiso Municipality;
4. To uncover and analyse approaches used by the iNdumiso Municipality to curb corruption; and
5. To recommend solutions to ensure efficient service delivery that is devoid of corruption.

5.2 Profile of the Participants

Table 5.1 summarises the demographic composition of the participants. The study utilised a sample of 18 participants (10 officials from the iNdumiso Municipality and 8 participants from the iNdumiso community).

Table 5.1: Profile of municipal workers

Code	Position/ Title	Number of Participants	Description of Role
M1	Town Planner	1	Responsible for urban planning and development projects
M2	Internal Auditor	1	Conducts audits to ensure financial compliance and integrity
M3	HR Manager	1	Manages human resources, including recruitment and policy Enforcement
M4	Water and Sanitation Officer	1	Oversees water supply and sanitation services
M5	Environmental Officer	1	Ensures compliance with environmental regulations and Policies
M6	Financial Officer	1	Manages municipal budgets and financial reporting

M7	Public Relations Officer	1	Handles public communications and community relations
M8	Infrastructure Manager	1	Oversees infrastructure projects and maintenance.
M9	Legal Advisor	1	Provides legal counselling and ensures legal compliance
M10	IT Specialist	1	Manages municipal IT systems and infrastructure

Table 5.2: Profile of community members

Code	Role	Position/ Title	Number of Years Residing in the Community	Description of Role
C11	Community Member	Local Business Owner	15	Represents local businesses and their perspectives on service delivery.
C12	Community Member	School Teacher	10	Represents the educational sector and community concerns
C13	Community Member	Health Worker	12	Provides insights from the healthcare sector on municipal Services
C14	Community Member	Community Leader	20	Represents community interests and concerns
C15	Community Member	Resident	8	Represents general community perspectives on municipal Services
C16	Community Member	Social Worker	7	Offers perspectives from social services and community support Structures
C17	Community Member	Retired Government Employee	25	Provides historical insights and experienced perspectives on municipal governance
C18	Community Member	Local NGO Representative	10	Represents NGOs and their views on service delivery

Researcher's summary

5.3 Community Members' Perceptions and Experiences of Corruption

5.3.1 Participants' perspectives on the impact of corruption on service delivery

The first theme that emerged responded to the first objective of the study, which was to Explore perceptions on how corruption influences service delivery in the study area. The data offered compelling evidence that corruption was rife and profoundly affected service delivery. The narratives also revealed that both economic and social consequences significantly impacted community life. The bar graph visually illustrates the proportion of both municipal and community participants who believed that corruption had a direct impact on service delivery. The graph allows for a clear and concise representation of the data and facilitates easy comparison of the responses.



Figure 5.1: Frequency of community members' (n=18) views on the impact of corruption on service delivery

Source: Researcher's illustration

5.3.2 Understanding corruption

5.3.2.1 Corruption as a systemic disease

The literature perceives corruption as a systemic disease that permeates every level of society and perpetuates a cycle of dysfunction, inequality, and social injustice in municipal settings (Transparency International, 2020). This notion was affirmed by the participants in this study. The word ‘corruption’ is derived from the Latin word ‘*corruptus*’, which means to break up (Mantzaris and Pillay, 2014) and emphasises the destructive effect of corruption on the fabric of society and the situations where agents and public officers break the confidence entrusted in them. For instance, C11, a local business owner, articulated the disruptive nature of corruption by stating the following:

“In simple terms, my daughter, corruption is like a cancer: it spreads silently, infecting every part of the system. It starts with small bribes, then grows into embezzlement and nepotism. Before we know it, the entire institution is rotten, and we're left with a diseased system that serves only the corrupt. It's a systematic disease that needs urgent treatment, or it will consume everything in its path.”

A local NGO representative, who had been living in the community for more than 10 years, also added his understanding of corruption as follows:

“Municipal corruption is when local officials play dirty with public funds meant for our community's needs. It's like seeing potholes remain unfilled while councillors buy new cars, or water shortages while they enjoy lush gardens. They promise to serve us, but [they] serve themselves instead. It's a betrayal of trust, and we deserve better” (C18).

These statements captured the pervasive and destructive nature of corruption which, according to the World Bank (2019), can undermine institutional effectiveness and erode public trust. The notion of corruption as a disease highlights that it infiltrates and disrupts various aspects of societal functioning and creates an environment where public services are compromised and the community's trust in its service institution is diminished.

5.3.2.2 Corruption creates a culture of fear and mistrust

Some participants’ reluctance to speak out ostensibly stemmed from a fear of being targeted, which indicated that those who engaged in corrupt practices might use intimidation to maintain

their power. The literature argues that this fear effectively silences potential whistleblowers and critics, allowing corruption to continue unchecked (Transparency International, 2020). Moreover, by discouraging people from speaking out, this fear helps perpetuate corrupt practices, thus creating a self-sustaining cycle (de Graaf, 2007).

C13, who was a health worker with 12 years of experience in the community, provided a poignant insight into the psychological impact of corruption:

“I am afraid to speak out against corruption because I don't want to be targeted. It's a culture of fear” (C13).

This fear of retaliation not only silences dissent but also perpetuates a cycle where corruption remains unchecked (Transparency International, 2021). The latter organisation notes that such a climate of fear can stifle whistleblowing and discourage public accountability, allowing corrupt practices to flourish without challenge (Transparency International, 2021). The culture of fear described by the participant implies a broader issue as individuals may be reluctant to confront corruption due to concerns for their safety, and this of necessity contributes to a sustained atmosphere of impunity that exacerbates and perpetuates corruption. These accounts are consistent with secondary evidence from the Auditor-General's 2021/2022 report, which identified R48 million in irregular expenditure within iNdumiso Municipality, much of it linked to non-compliance with procurement regulations. Such financial mismanagement reflects the literature's assertion that systemic corruption undermines institutional effectiveness and erodes public trust (World Bank, 2019).

From a theoretical perspective, the Rational Choice Theory provides insight into why systemic corruption persists: individuals in positions of authority weigh the personal benefits of corrupt acts against the low perceived risk of punishment. In contexts like iNdumiso, weak enforcement mechanisms and limited oversight make the “cost” of corrupt behaviour negligible, enabling it to spread unchecked. This dynamic reinforces the metaphor of corruption as a disease once embedded, it infects multiple systems and is difficult to eradicate without decisive, systemic intervention.

5.3.2.3 Economic dependence and the bribery cycle

The reliance on bribery creates inefficiencies in the allocation and use of resources, hindering overall economic development (Rose-Ackerman, 1999). The participants admitted that they

felt compelled to pay bribes just to access essential services, which indicated a severe breakdown in the proper functioning of this local municipality as a public state institution. Having to pay bribes for basic services adds an extra financial strain on individuals and families and particularly affects those with limited resources (Klitgaard, 1988). C15, who had resided in the area for 8 years, provided a stark illustration of the economic toll of corruption:

“I have to bribe officials to get basic services. It’s a never-ending cycle of corruption.”

This statement underscored how corruption compelled individuals in this community to engage in bribery to access essential services, and reflected a broader cycle of dependency. Research conducted by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (2020) has highlighted that such practices divert public resources away from their intended purposes, thus exacerbating poverty and perpetuating economic inefficiencies. The prevalence of bribery not only deepens economic hardship, but also entrenches a system where individuals are forced into corrupt transactions

to meet their basic needs (Rose-Ackerman, 1999). Therefore, as people are forced into corrupt transactions to meet their basic needs, it reinforces and perpetuates the cycle of corruption, as the participants affirmed.

5.3.2.4 Erosion of social cohesion

The data also indicated that corruption in the study area undermined social cohesion. The literature affirms that the pervasive nature of corruption erodes trust within the community and between the community and its institutions (Transparency International, 2019). This erosion of social trust contributes to a breakdown in social cohesion, making it difficult for residents to unite in efforts to address common challenges (Robert Putnam, 2000). The latter author argues that corruption and political malfeasance can diminish social capital, weaken communal bonds, and foster a sense of alienation (Putnam, 2000). In a similar manner, the disintegration of social cohesion, as experienced by the residents of iNdumiso Municipality, further exacerbated the community's difficulties in overcoming the challenges posed by corruption.

5.3.2.5 Perceived Impact of corruption on public trust and perceptions

The community participants demonstrated a significant lack of trust in the municipality and its leaders, and many participants felt that their concerns were ignored and that municipal employees were more interested in enriching themselves than serving the community. According to the literature, the allocation of resources and budgeting choices are influenced by public trust, and citizens may be less inclined to support funding projects or pay taxes or fees that go toward providing services when trust is low (Naidoo, 2012), and this may result in insufficient funding for crucial programs and services. Without trust, decision-making procedures may become less transparent and more influenced by political factors than by the requirements of the general public. It may also result in improper resource allocation and a preference for short-term rewards over long-term advantages. C12, who was a school teacher with 10 years of experience in the community, expressed frustration with the lack of response to reports of corruption:

“When you report corruption, nothing happens. It's like talking to a brick wall. They just ignore you”.

C17, a retired government employee with 25 years of experience in the community, shared the following experience of the lack of trust in the municipality:

“I have lost count of how many times I've seen our local municipality make promises they don't keep. They say they're working for us, but it feels like they're just working for themselves. I don't trust them to make decisions that benefit our community. They're always talking about 'transparency' and 'accountability', but it's just words. I want to see action. I want to know that my tax money is being used for something that actually helps me and my neighbours”.

The statement affirmed the sentiment that was also expressed by others that reporting corruption yielded no meaningful action, but contributed to a pervasive sense of helplessness among community members. The World Bank (2019) emphasises that widespread corruption undermines institutional credibility and public trust, as citizens lose confidence in the ability of these institutions to address their grievances effectively. The data of this study corroborated this view, demonstrating how the perceived ineffectiveness of the municipality exacerbated the erosion of public trust. In the same vein, C13, who had been a member of the community for more than 10 years, stated:

"I've tried to report corruption, but they cover it up. They protect their own."

The perception existed that corrupt practices were not only prevalent but also actively shielded from scrutiny by those in power. Transparency International (2021) argues that this sense of complicity and cover-up undermines trust and fuels the belief that corruption is entrenched within the municipal system. Transparency International (2021) also notes that corruption often leads to a culture of impunity where protective mechanisms are in place to shield wrongdoers from accountability. The data of the current study affirmed this perception, as community members' attempts to expose corruption were met with resistance and dismissal, reinforcing the notion that public officials were more concerned with protecting their own interests than addressing systemic issues. This sentiment was echoed by many participants who felt that the municipality was not responsive to their needs and was more interested in perpetuating its own power and privilege. As the data were reviewed, it was noted that this lack of trust was not only a consequence of corruption, but also a perpetuating factor, as the community members felt that their concerns were ignored and that municipal officials did not honour their accountability towards them.

The African Development Bank (2019) notes that corruption can have severe psychological and social impacts on communities, including increased stress, anxiety, and depression, and

argues that the erosion of trust and the perception of ineffective reporting mechanisms have a direct impact on how community members view service delivery. The statement *"I have to bribe officials to get basic services. It's a never-ending cycle of corruption"* illustrates how the pervasive nature of corruption influences perceptions of service accessibility and fairness. The International Monetary Fund (2020) highlights that such experiences are symptomatic of deeper systemic problems where corruption diverts resources and undermines the quality of public services. It may therefore be argued that the frustration of having to resort to bribery to access essential services is a direct cause of the lack of trust in the municipal system and the belief that corruption is an insurmountable barrier to obtaining fair treatment.

5.3.2.6 Perpetuation of negative perceptions

Negative perceptions and diminished trust in public institutions create a self-reinforcing cycle, where distrust leads to disengagement and decreased efforts to address corruption (Robert Putnam, 2000). The latter author's research on social capital suggests that the erosion of trust weakens community engagement and collective action, making it hard to mobilize support for reforms and combat entrenched corrupt practices (Putnam, 2000). The data reflected this dynamic, where the combination of ineffective reporting mechanisms and cover-ups contributed to a sense of disillusionment and apathy towards efforts to combat corruption.

The data also revealed that the lack of trust in the municipality perpetuated a cycle of disengagement and disillusionment, as community members felt that their voices were not being heard and that their concerns were not being addressed. C15, a resident with 8 years of experience in the community, pertinently expressed this sentiment:

"I've stopped attending community meetings because I feel like my voice isn't being heard. It's a waste of time."

According to Sheverdyayev (2016), the erosion of trust and the perception of ineffective reporting mechanisms have a direct impact on how community members view service delivery. When citizens perceive that their taxes are being misused or diverted through corruption, they become less willing to cooperate with authorities and follow the law. This lack of trust can hinder effective policy implementation and service delivery as citizens may not engage with government programs or provide essential feedback for improvement (Shaverdyayev, 2016). One participant's comment that *"It's a never-ending cycle of corruption"* illustrates how the pervasive nature of corruption influences perceptions of service accessibility and fairness. The

International Monetary Fund (2020) highlights that such experiences are symptomatic of deeper systemic problems where corruption diverts resources and undermines the quality of public services. The frustration with having to resort to bribery to access essential services is a direct consequence of the lack of trust in the system and the belief that corruption is an insurmountable barrier to obtaining fair treatment. From a Principal–Agent Theory perspective, these findings indicate a breakdown in the accountability relationship between municipal officials (agents) and the community (principals), with personal or political interests taking precedence over service obligations. Similarly, Rational Choice Theory explains that officials may engage in corrupt acts when the perceived benefits (financial gain, political advancement) outweigh the perceived risks of detection or punishment.

The negative perceptions and diminished trust in public institutions create a self-reinforcing cycle, where distrust leads to disengagement and decreased efforts to address corruption (Robert Putnam, 2000). Research on social capital underscores the critical role of trust in fostering community engagement and collective action. Putnam (2000) argues that eroded trust weakens these dynamics, hindering efforts to mobilize support for reforms and combat entrenched corruption. This research resonates with the findings of this study, where ineffective reporting mechanisms and cover-ups fostered a climate of disillusionment and apathy among citizens, undermining their willingness to actively participate in anti-corruption efforts.

5.3.2.7 Reported Inadequacy of basic services due to corruption

The participants' views illuminated various significant inadequacies in essential services such as poor water, electricity, and sanitation provision, with many expressing a sense of being trapped in poverty. C17, who had been a community member for 10 years, articulated this concern as follows:

“We have been waiting for months for the municipality to fix the water pipes. Meanwhile, we're forced to buy water from private companies. It's expensive and unaffordable.”

This sentiment was echoed by another participant who highlighted the dire circumstances caused by a lack of reliable public services. C15 explained the direct link between corruption and inadequate service delivery:

“From my experience, corruption leads to inadequate services because it siphons off resources meant for essential public goods. For instance, money allocated for road

maintenance gets embezzled, leaving our roads in disrepair. Similarly, bribes paid to secure government contracts mean substandard materials are used, resulting in poorly constructed buildings and infrastructure. This not only wastes public funds but also puts our safety at risk.”

Corruption often results in the misallocation of resources intended for public services. When funds earmarked for essential services are diverted through corrupt practices, the ability to deliver healthcare, education, infrastructure, and social welfare is severely compromised (Jaing, 2017). Moreover, the misallocation of funds and taxpayers' money adversely affects citizens' well-being, undermines their quality of life, and perpetuates a cycle of poverty. As noted by Fedorina (2014), corruption negatively impacts the ability of municipalities to provide services effectively. It is noteworthy that, when the personal interests of municipal officials take precedence over public needs, it compromises service delivery where it is most essential. Furthermore, corruption frequently results in the hiring or promotion of incompetent personnel due to favouritism rather than merit (Proyava, 2012). This practice diminishes the quality of services, as inappropriately appointed officials usually lack the necessary skills and motivation to fulfil their responsibilities effectively because their focus shifts away from delivering quality services to serving their own or the interests of corrupt individuals or groups (Zenyuk, Malinetsky, and Faller, 2016).

5.3.2.8 Delays and inefficiencies in service provision

Recurring issues that were identified by the participants were delays and inefficiency in addressing basic service needs. These themes emerged strongly from the interviews, with multiple participants highlighting how corruption directly impacted the quality and timeliness of essential services. Three participants in particular provided illustrative examples. C17, with extensive experience of working with municipal officers, described how corruption affected infrastructure maintenance:

"I've seen how corruption slows down work in the municipal office as I have worked with them for several years. For example, when they need to repair a potholed road, the procurement process takes months because officials are waiting for kickbacks from contractors. Meanwhile, the road gets worse, causing accidents and damage to vehicles."

This account demonstrated that corruption not only delayed necessary repairs, but also exacerbated infrastructure problems, potentially leading to public safety issues. C12, who was a school teacher with 10 years of experience in the community, shared some experiences with corruption in waste management,

"As a resident, I've experienced first-hand how corruption affects our community's services. For instance, the local waste management company doesn't collect trash

regularly because they're bribing officials to ignore their poor performance. As a result, our streets are filled with garbage, attracting pests and creating health hazards. It's infuriating to see our community suffer because of corrupt deals that prioritize profits over people's needs."

C16, a social worker with 7 years of experience in the community, described challenges in obtaining permits due to corruption:

"I've tried to get a permit to renovate my house, but the process is slow and costly due to corruption. Officials demand bribes to expedite the process, and even then, they delay approval. Meanwhile, my family has to live in a cramped and unsafe space. It's frustrating to see how corruption adds to the financial burden and stress of everyday life, making it hard for us to improve our living conditions."

These statements illustrated a significant gap between the community's needs and the municipality's ability, or willingness, to respond effectively to the needs of residents. The prolonged delays in fixing critical infrastructure, such as water pipes, forced residents to rely on costly alternatives, which exacerbated financial strain and contributed to a sense of abandonment. According to the International Monetary Fund (2020), when public resources are diverted or misused, essential services like water and sanitation often suffer, leading to delays and increased costs for residents. The reliance on private companies for basic needs, as described by one of the participants, exposed a broader issue where public services failed to meet the community's expectations, thus forcing individuals to revert to costly and less reliable alternatives. From a theoretical standpoint, Rational Choice Theory offers insight into why such inefficiencies persist. Officials may deliberately slow processes to create opportunities for extracting bribes, calculating that the benefits outweigh the risk of sanction. This behaviour not only disrupts service provision but also entrenches systemic inefficiency, as residents lose faith in municipal processes and resort to informal or private solutions.

5.3.2.9 Degradation of public infrastructure

The degradation of roads, poor street cleanliness, and malfunctioning streetlights are indicative of a broader neglect in maintaining essential services and infrastructure. Any such degradation not only affects the daily lives of residents, but also undermines public safety and quality of life and the poor condition of public infrastructure is closely linked to the broader issues of corruption and poor resource mismanagement (Klitgaard, 1988). The World Bank (2019)

underscores the point that ineffective governance and persistent corruption can lead to the neglect of public infrastructure, as funds that should be allocated for maintenance and improvement are misused or siphoned off. As was observed, the poor state of roads and public

spaces in the iNdumiso Municipality area reflected these issues, highlighting how corruption and mismanagement resulted in the visible and impactful deterioration of public assets.

5.3.2.10 Perceived Impact on community well-being

According to the literature, the inadequacy of basic services has a profound impact on community well-being, and the combined effects of unreliable water supply, deteriorating infrastructure, and neglected public spaces contribute to a sense of frustration and disillusionment among residents (UN Habitat, 2015). The experiences shared by the community members illustrated how these service deficiencies exacerbated existing challenges, such as financial strain and diminished quality of life. C15 expressed the emotional toll of this situation on residents:

“Honestly, corruption in our community feels like a never-ending nightmare. It's like, we're all trying to build a better life for ourselves and our families, but the system is stacked against us. Our streets are crumbling, our schools are struggling, and our hospitals are stretched thin. And it's all because some people in power are more interested in lining their own pockets than in helping us thrive. It's exhausting, you know? We just want to feel like we can trust the people in charge to do what's right. Is that too much to ask?”

This comment illustrates that inadequacies in basic services can undermine social cohesion and trust in local governance, particularly when essential services are poorly managed or unavailable and residents feel disconnected from their local government that is perceived as ineffective or unresponsive (Putnam, 2000). Clearly, inadequate services not only affect residents' daily lives, but also contribute to community disengagement, mistrust, and anger.

5.3.2.11 Poor resource allocation and mismanagement

The subtheme of poor resource allocation and mismanagement exposed how corruption affected the distribution and management of resources in the iNdumiso Municipality. This subtheme delved into the ways in which corruption distorted resource allocation, leading to inefficiencies and inequities in service delivery.

Distortion of resource allocation: Corruption often leads to significant distortions in how resources are allocated. In iNdumiso Municipality, this issue manifested in several ways. According to the participants, funds that were intended for critical infrastructure improvement

and public services were redirected for personal gain or siphoned off through corrupt practices. For example, when budgetary allocations for essential projects such as water pipe repairs or road maintenance were misappropriated, the improvement projects experienced prolonged delays and substandard service delivery was the result. C18, who had lived in the community for over 15 years, expressed the community's frustration with the situation:

“Corruption distorts the allocation of resources and undermines the very fabric of our community's development. Projects that benefit the few rather than the many get prioritised, while essential infrastructure and services are neglected. It's frustrating to see our community's needs take a backseat to personal gain and political favours. We need transparency and accountability to ensure that our resources are used to create a thriving, equitable community for all.”

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) highlights that corruption can severely undermine resource allocation, leading to a situation where public funds are not used efficiently. Corrupt practices often divert resources away from their intended purpose, leading to systemic inefficiencies and exacerbating service delivery challenges (International Monetary Fund, 2020). In the case of iNdumiso Municipality, the misallocation of resources due to corruption reportedly resulted in tangible consequences for residents, who faced prolonged service disruptions and financial burdens as a result.

Impact on public infrastructure: According to the participants, corruption had a profound and direct impact on the quality and maintenance of public infrastructure, with the poor condition of roads, public spaces, and utilities serving as a reflection of resource mismanagement within this municipality. The visible signs of deterioration, such as pothole-ridden roads and unkempt public areas, were deemed symptomatic of broader systemic issues related to corruption. One local business owner, who had lived in iNdumiso for 15 years and represented the interests of local businesses, succinctly captured this reality:

“The roads are potholed, the streets are dirty, and the lights don't work.”

This statement illustrated the frustration residents felt regarding inadequate maintenance and repair work, which they associated with corrupt practices that diverted essential resources away from necessary public works. When resources are misallocated or siphoned off for corrupt purposes, the maintenance and enhancement of infrastructure suffer significantly (The World

Bank, 2019). The latter body highlights that ineffective governance and corruption can lead to the deterioration of public infrastructure, as funds earmarked for maintenance and upgrades are misused or embezzled (World Bank, 2019). In iNdumiso, the state of disrepair in public infrastructure resulted in crumbling roads and malfunctioning streetlights, and these features starkly reflected the consequences of resource mismanagement on the quality of essential services. C13, a community member and activist who had been advocating for local improvements for over 15 years, elaborated on this issue:

“It’s disheartening to see that money meant for our community’s development just disappears. We could have safer roads and cleaner parks if the funds were used properly instead of lining the pockets of those in charge.”

The above sentiment underscores the widespread perception that corruption not only compromises the immediate quality of infrastructure, but also hinders community development and well-being, which is a notion that is supported by (Keen, 2003). Furthermore, the neglect of public infrastructure can exacerbate social inequalities, as the communities most affected by poor services often lack the political clout to demand accountability (Keen, 2003).

Equity and access to services: Corruption in resource allocation significantly impacts equity and access to services in a local municipality. When resources are distributed based on corrupt practices, certain areas or groups may receive preferential treatment, while others are neglected. This inequity exacerbates existing social and economic disparities and creates a vicious cycle for disadvantaged and marginalised communities (Svensson, 2005). A community leader, who had been representing residents’ interests for 20 years, articulated this concern as follows:

“Corruption undermines the fundamental principle of equity and access to services. When officials prioritise their own interests over the needs of the community, marginalised groups are pushed further to the fringes. I’ve seen how corruption denies low-income families access to affordable housing, healthcare, and education. It’s heart-breaking to witness seniors, people with disabilities, and minority groups being disproportionately affected by corruption. We need to reclaim our public services and ensure they serve the most vulnerable among us, not just the well-connected and powerful.”

This statement highlights the urgent need for reforms that prioritise equity in public service delivery. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2020) corroborates this

perspective as it argues that corruption exacerbates inequalities by skewing the distribution of public resources and services. In the iNdumiso municipal area, the misallocation of resources created an environment where disadvantaged members of the community faced great challenges in accessing essential services. C11, a resident who had lived in iNdumiso for 8 years, shared the following experience:

“I live in an area that always seems to be forgotten. We hear about new projects in wealthier neighbourhoods, but for us, it’s like we’re invisible. Our roads are never fixed, and our children have to travel far for schooling.”

Moreover, the inequity that was experienced in service access led to a sense of disenfranchisement and resentment among the residents. Another community member shared the following:

“When I see how some people get quick access to services just because they have connections, it makes me feel like our needs don’t matter. It’s demoralising to know that help is available but not for us” (C12).

This sentiment underscored the frustration felt by those who were systematically overlooked. Equitable access to essential public services is vital for human development, inclusive growth, and tackling persistent inequality as it plays a crucial role in addressing disparities between different income groups, urban versus rural areas, and various demographic groups (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2023). It may thus be argued that addressing equity in access to services requires comprehensive strategies that go beyond merely extending formal access. In fact, it must involve the improvement of the quality and responsiveness of services, attention to socio-economic redress, and the implementation of anti-corruption measures.

5.3.3 Forms of corruption in service delivery

Tanzi (1997) argues that corruption may enrich municipal officials as well as private individuals who obtain a large share of public benefits or bear a low share of public costs due to connections in the public sector. Opportunities to use one's power for personal gain have driven people to commit financial misconduct that, in many instances, negatively impacted society and the victims of their greed. ‘Power corrupts’ is a common saying that refers to the power of people who take ethical shortcuts without regard for the suffering of others (Ronald, 1996).

5.3.3.1 Bribery

According to the participants, bribing municipal workers and officials was common as citizens often felt compelled to solicit municipal officials' support with bribes to receive basic services such as water, electricity and sanitation connections and waste removal services. Bribery frequently entails diverting resources from their original purpose while funds allocated for public services are siphoned off for personal gain, leaving insufficient resources for the effective operation of important services such as healthcare, education, waste management, and infrastructure improvement (Kaufmann, Montoriol-Garriga, and Recanatini, 2008). The social worker, who had lived in iNdumiso for 7 years, shared the following observation:

“In our community, bribery has become a norm when it comes to accessing services from the municipality. For instance, if you want to get your water connection fixed, you have to pay a bribe to the municipal worker who comes to fix it. If you don't pay, they'll just leave you waiting for weeks or even months” (C16).

Another community member recounted a distressing incident involving a neighbour:

“I remember one time, my neighbour's house was flooded because of a burst pipe, and they needed the municipality to come and fix it. But the municipal worker said they wouldn't come unless they paid a bribe. My neighbour didn't have the money, so they had to wait for days for the water to be shut off. It's situations like these that make me feel like bribery is just a way of life here. And it's not just the municipality, it's the whole system. Even the politicians are in on it” (C12).

A retired government employee with 25 years of experience in public service explained how bribery functioned within the municipality:

“I can explain how bribery can work in a municipality, but I want to make it clear that I don't condone or support such activities. Bribery is a harmful practice that undermines trust in government and can lead to unfair outcomes. For instance, first, payment for services. Municipal officials or employees may demand payment from citizens in exchange for providing services such as issuing permits, licenses, or processing paperwork. Secondly, contracting and procurement. Bribery can occur when awarding contracts or procuring goods and services. Officials may accept payment in exchange for favouring certain contractors or suppliers. Thirdly, zoning and land-use: Municipal officials may accept bribes to influence zoning or land-use

decisions, allowing developers to build projects that might not otherwise be approved. Fourthly, inspections and enforcement: Bribery can occur when officials accept payment to overlook violations or not enforce regulations. And lastly: political favours: Municipal officials may accept bribes in exchange for political favours, such as supporting certain policies or candidates” (C17).

A lack of service delivery due to bribery can hinder socio-economic development. Without proper access to healthcare, education, clean water, and other essential services, communities struggle to improve their quality of life and break free from the cycle of poverty. Bribery can have an adverse impact on service delivery, resulting in inefficient resource allocation, poor service quality, and loss of public trust, while it also becomes a barrier to development (Andvig et al., 2000).

5.3.3.2 Nepotism

The data underscored the fact that nepotism was a significant form of corruption with profound effects on service delivery in the study area. The participants argued that nepotism pervaded the municipality's hiring practices, leading to substantial operational inefficiencies and erosion of public trust. Nepotism, which they defined as favouring family members or friends for municipal positions regardless of their qualifications, resulted in the appointment of underqualified personnel in key roles. A school teacher with 10 years of experience in the community shared the following perspective:

“I have observed that nepotism in the municipality can significantly impact service delivery in several ways. When positions are filled based on personal relationships rather than merit, it can lead to unqualified personnel being appointed to key positions. This can result in inadequate service delivery, as these individuals may not possess the necessary skills or expertise to perform their duties effectively. For instance, a municipal manager appoints their cousin, who has no experience in finance, to head the finance department. This leads to inaccurate financial reporting, delayed payments to suppliers, and poor budget management” (C12).

An NGO representative with 10 years of experience in iNdumiso elaborated on the broader implications of nepotism:

“Nepotism has led to favouritism and bias in decision-making, which resulted in the unfair treatment of certain individuals or groups. This has led to unequal access to

services, discrimination, and poor service delivery. Sadly, I cannot mention names of people who once awarded contracts to their family members' companies without following proper procurement procedures, resulting in substandard services and overcharging” (C18).

The above observations underscored that nepotism extended beyond hiring practices and also influenced procurement processes, potentially leading to substandard services and financial mismanagement. A health worker who had been serving the community for 12 years commented on the impact of nepotism on public trust as follows:

“Nepotism has damaged the reputation of the municipality and eroded trust among citizens. When citizens perceived that personal relationships were being prioritised over merit and fairness, they lost confidence in the municipality's ability to deliver services effectively” (C13).

Kaufmann and Kraay's (2002) research links nepotism to the inefficiency of public services. Their study suggests that when positions are filled through favouritism, this practice undermines the effectiveness of public sector operations and leads to significant service delivery failures. Additionally, nepotism engenders favouritism and bias in decision-making processes. The internal auditor noted that this biased attitude often resulted in unfair treatment and discrimination, further compounding issues within the municipality. For example, there were instances when municipal officials awarded contracts to companies owned by family members without following proper procurement procedures. This practice led to substandard service delivery and overcharging, which are findings that are corroborated by the World Bank (2014). The World Bank (2014) emphasises that corruption, including nepotism, distorts procurement processes and leads to inflated costs and diminished service quality.

Beyond operational inefficiencies, nepotism severely damaged the municipality's reputation and eroded public trust. M1 revealed that, when citizens perceived that personal relationships overshadowed merit and fairness, their confidence in the municipality's ability to provide effective services was undermined. The notion of the erosion of trust is supported by Rothstein and Teorell (2008), who argue that corruption erodes public trust in institutions, while their integrity is essential for effective governance and citizen engagement. Trust in public institutions is crucial for their legitimacy and effectiveness and, when this trust is compromised, it can lead to disengagement and dissatisfaction among the public.

5.3.3.3 Embezzlement

The findings highlighted that embezzlement was a pervasive form of corruption that significantly undermined service delivery in the study area. This issue was exemplified by narratives that reported cases of municipal officials who had misappropriated funds intended for essential services, such as road maintenance and the upkeep of public facilities. The ramifications of embezzlement extended beyond mere financial loss, as they disrupted the provision of vital services and manifested in the pervasive consequences of corruption within the municipality under study. A retired government employee with 25 years of experience articulated the nature of embezzlement as follows:

“Firstly, I would define embezzlement as taking money or resources that don't belong to you, but were entrusted to you, and using them for your own personal gain. Embezzlement has resulted in significant financial losses for the municipality and has impacted the delivery of essential services. There were allegations, I do not know whether they are true or not, that an accountant in the municipal finance department was accused of embezzling funds meant for road maintenance. This could be the reason why the municipality now does not have enough funds to repair and maintain roads, leading to potholes, traffic congestion, and safety hazards” (C17).

The above narrative underscored the direct link between financial misappropriation and the deterioration of critical infrastructure, and the consequences of embezzlement would have been multifaceted. Financially, the municipality faced substantial losses that would limit its ability to fulfil basic obligations to its residents. The literature argues that, when funds earmarked for public services are siphoned off, the resulting budget shortfalls can lead to deteriorating infrastructure and inadequate service delivery (Bardhan, 1997). Roads may remain unrepaired and public facilities may fall into disrepair, which are issues that exacerbate community frustration and erode trust in the local government. Moreover, the broader implications of embezzlement extend to community well-being and safety. Poorly maintained roads not only hinder transportation, but also pose significant safety risks to residents, while traffic congestion and hazardous road conditions can lead to accidents and further diminish the quality of life for community members (Keefer & Khemani, 2005). The World Bank (2019) emphasises that effective governance and the proper allocation of resources are crucial for maintaining public infrastructure and services.

Dzomira (2017) asserts that poor financial governance and the misallocation of resources due to corruption obstruct effective service delivery. The mismanagement of public funds, as was evidenced by the participants' references to the misuse of road maintenance funds, exemplifies how corruption can exacerbate infrastructural problems and diminish the quality of public services (Harrison, 2007). The literature further supports the observation that embezzlement contributes to financial mismanagement and maladministration within government departments. According to Auditor-General South Africa (AGSA) (2017) and scholars such as Dzomira (2017), Sibanda (2017), Saka (2016) and Naidoo (2012), embezzlement and the lack of accountability for the misappropriation of public funds are frequently associated with unauthorised procurement practices and public funds that siphoned off and are unaccounted for. This mismanagement not only impairs the efficient allocation of resources, but also undermines the integrity of financial systems within municipalities.

The consequences of embezzlement extend beyond immediate financial losses as they include the misallocation of resources. When funds are diverted from their intended purposes, such as healthcare services, it results in inadequate provision of essential services (cite). For instance, if funds meant for healthcare are diverted due to embezzlement, a municipality may lack the resources to purchase medical supplies and equipment, thereby compromising healthcare services and potentially endangering citizens' lives (Edoun, 2015). The latter author also highlights that any misuse of public monies for personal benefit is an issue that exacerbates the negative impacts of corruption on public service delivery.

5.3.3.4 Misappropriation of resources

The findings revealed that the misappropriation of funds was a significant form of corruption in the municipality under study. Municipal officials reported using resources or funds for unintended purposes, such as using funds meant for service delivery to finance personal projects. Misappropriation can have far-reaching consequences for service delivery in a municipality, leading to financial losses, inefficient use of resources, delays or cancellation of projects, lack of trust, inaccurate financial reporting, legal and reputational consequences, inequitable distribution of resources, and poor service delivery (Mabunda, 2023). It is essential for municipalities to have robust financial management systems and internal controls to prevent misappropriation and ensure effective service delivery. The testimonies by the community members in iNdumiso Municipality painted a troubling picture of how misappropriation of

funds and resources severely impacted service delivery and numerous residents' quality of life. For instance, a retired government employee (C17) with 25 years of experience stated:

"I want to say that our community has been plagued by misappropriation of funds and resources for many years. It has become a norm that funds meant for development projects and service delivery are embezzled or misused by those in power."

The healthcare worker (C13), who had been serving the community for 12 years, expressed a deep sense of frustration:

"Misappropriation of resources is a slap in the face of our community. We work hard to contribute to the system, and when those in power misuse our resources, it's like they're saying our efforts don't matter. Our children's education, our healthcare, and our infrastructure suffer because of their greed. It's not just about the money; it's about the trust and hope that's lost. When we can't rely on our leaders to do what's right, it's hard to feel like we're building a better future. We deserve better. We deserve leaders who will use our resources to uplift our community, not line their own pockets."

Agale-Kolgo (2018) emphasises that corruption leads to the misallocation of resources, particularly when government funds are approved based on expected personal benefits rather than genuine community needs. This creates an environment where corrupt practices become entrenched, and this further exacerbates inequality and hinders economic growth. Moreover, the misuse of resources can lead to significant social consequences. For instance, when public officials prioritise their interests over community needs, essential services like healthcare and education suffer, and this contributes to long-term societal issues such as poverty and lack of job opportunities (Agale-Kolgo, 2018). A resident who had lived in iNdumiso for 8 years (C15) provided specific examples of how misappropriation affected essential services:

"The water treatment plant in our community has not been functioning properly for years. The funds meant for its maintenance and upgrade have been misappropriated, leaving us with contaminated water that is undrinkable. Many of us have fallen ill from drinking this water, and some have even died. Similarly, the healthcare services in our community are inadequate. The funds meant for healthcare are often misused, and the healthcare facilities lack the necessary equipment and staff. Many of us have had to travel long distances to access healthcare services, and some have even died due to lack of access to medical care. The roads in our community are also in a deplorable state. The funds meant for road maintenance are often embezzled, and the roads are

left to deteriorate. This has made it difficult for us to access markets, schools, and healthcare facilities. We urge our leaders and the government to take action to address this issue and ensure that funds are used for their intended purposes. We also call for transparency and accountability in the use of funds and resources.”

The findings affirmed that misappropriation of resources was a critical issue that significantly undermined public trust and the effective delivery of services. It involved the dishonest misappropriation of public assets by individuals in positions of authority, leading to severe consequences for community welfare and governance.

5.3.4 The drivers of corruption

5.3.4.1 Lack of accountability

The lack of accountability within public services is a significant issue that undermines the effectiveness and integrity of the local governance structure (Robinson, 2008). When public officials are not held accountable for their actions, it creates an environment where corruption thrives, leading to mismanagement of resources and a decline in the quality of the services provided to citizens. Rational Choice Theory helps explain why lack of accountability perpetuates corruption. In an environment where oversight is weak, the “cost” of engaging in corrupt acts whether political, legal, or reputational is perceived as low. Consequently, officials may rationally choose corrupt behaviour if it offers personal or political gain. This reinforces a vicious cycle: low accountability leads to more corruption, which further weakens oversight and diminishes public trust. This systemic issue is characterised by several key factors that contribute to a culture of impunity. The community members lamented this situation by expressing significant concerns about insufficient oversight mechanisms. A local business owner, who had resided in the community for 15 years (C11), expressed deep frustration with the lack of effective oversight:

“Even when issues are reported, it feels like they just disappear into a black hole. We need someone to hold our leaders accountable, but it seems like they’re all in it together.”

The community’s perception of accountability, or the lack thereof, directly impacted their trust in public service delivery. The participants agreed that, when their grievances went unheard or unaddressed, it diminished their willingness to engage with local governance processes,

including reporting instances of corruption. Earlier researchers, such as Mabeba (2021), support this view by indicating that weak accountability structures foster environments that are conducive for corrupt practices. Isabirye and Moloji (2023) also agrees, arguing that when citizens perceive a lack of accountability, it diminishes their trust in public institutions and discourages them from reporting corrupt activities. The interplay between accountability and

trust cannot be overstated. Research has indicated that when citizens are aware that strong accountability mechanisms are in place, they are highly likely to report corrupt activities. Conversely, a lack of accountability breeds apathy and cynicism, effectively disengaging communities from participatory governance (Gaventa and Barrett, 2012).

5.3.4.2 *Economic pressures*

Economic pressures emerged as a significant factor that contributed to corruption within the municipality under study, and this finding highlighted the complex interplay between financial instability and ethical decision-making. The participants referred to the lack of adequate salaries, which they perceived as a factor that drove some individuals toward corrupt practices as a means of survival. A health care worker, who had been serving the community for 12 years (C13), articulated the connection between inadequate pay and the temptation to commit corrupt acts:

“When you’re not paid well, it’s easy to justify taking a bribe or engaging in corrupt practices just to make ends meet. Many people are struggling financially; so, when an opportunity for extra income arises through corrupt means, it can be hard to resist.”

A retired government employee with 25 years of experience (C17) elaborated on the specific financial pressures that drove some people to corruption:

“I know people who have taken bribes because their salaries are not enough to support their families. Children need to go to school, food is expensive, cars are expensive, but salaries remain low. I believe that if the government can pay their employees a salary that will be equal to their needs, we won’t have to deal with issues like this.”

Studies have shown that low salaries and economic instability increase public servants’ susceptibility to corruption (Kaufmann and Kraay, 2002), and the economic pressures faced by individuals can lead them to compromise their integrity for financial gain. Therefore, in addition to enhancing financial compensation, it is essential to implement comprehensive support systems for public servants, such as financial literacy programs and access to counselling services. These initiatives can equip individuals with the tools to navigate economic challenges without resorting to corruption, ultimately contributing to a more ethical and effective public service.

5.3.4.3 Cultural norms

When the data were scrutinised, it was evident that a culture of impunity had been normalised and had become a driver of corruption in the study area. The participants consistently and unanimously described a landscape where corrupt practices were not only tolerated, but expected. Cultural norms that provide guidelines for ethical behaviour and decision-making tend to be passed down through generations. Matsumoto and Hwang (2013) argue that culture shapes how individuals think, feel, and act, which can either facilitate or hinder corrupt practices. In societies where corruption has been normalised or is viewed as a necessary means to achieve personal or collective goals, individuals may be more likely to engage in corrupt behaviour. For instance, in some cultures, nepotism and favouritism are common practices that are not only accepted, but expected in social and professional interactions (Klitgaard, 2021). A resident, who had lived in the area for 8 years (C15), described the pervasive nature of corruption:

“It’s almost expected that you’ll have to pay someone off if you want anything done around here. New employees often learn quickly that this is how things work; if you want results, you had better be prepared to play the game.”

A local business owner with 15 years of experience in the community (C11) echoed this sentiment:

“Corruption is so ingrained in our society that many people don’t even see it as wrong anymore. It’s just part of how things operate.”

The literature affirms how entrenched cultural norms can perpetuate corrupt practices within communities (Huntington, 2015). When corruption becomes normalised, it becomes increasingly difficult to challenge and change these behaviours. Thus, culture-driven acceptance of corruption diminishes the likelihood of accountability, as individuals may feel that engaging in corrupt behaviour is a necessary survival tactic rather than a moral failing. Over time, this acceptance can lead to a systematic erosion of trust in public institutions and an overall decline in the quality of the services delivered to the people. Moreover, the implications of a culture of impunity extend beyond individual behaviour as they affect institutional integrity and public perception. When citizens observe corruption as a commonplace occurrence, their trust in public officials and institutions is diminished, leading to apathy and disengagement. This cycle perpetuates itself, as low citizen trust creates an environment where corruption can thrive with little scrutiny and few or no consequences (Monkam, 2014).

5.3.4.4 Lack of awareness of anti-corruption strategies

A number of participants were uncertain of any existing strategies that were employed to combat corruption. Pilusa (2024) argues that when citizens remain uninformed of their rights, available reporting mechanisms, and the importance of their participation in anti-corruption initiatives, the effectiveness of strategies to curb this scourge is diminished. This gap in knowledge and awareness not only perpetuates a culture of impunity, but also discourages civic engagement, thus ultimately allowing corrupt practices to flourish. The social worker (C16) was uncertain of any anti-corruption measures:

“I honestly don’t know what strategies are available to fight corruption in our municipality. It feels like we’re left in the dark about what can be done.”

A community leader with 20 years of experience (C14) added the following:

“We hear about anti-corruption initiatives in the news, but I don’t see any real impact in our community. If there are programs or policies in place, they’re not reaching us.”

The literature argues that a critical aspect of combating corruption is citizen participation. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2021), citizen involvement is essential for holding public officials accountable and ensuring transparency in governance. However, many citizens lack the necessary information to engage effectively in anti-corruption efforts, and this lack of awareness can lead to apathy as individuals may feel that their actions will not make a difference or that corruption is an inevitable part of life. As noted by Olsson (2014), citizen apathy can result in the failure to hold public officials accountable, allowing corruption to spread unchecked. A local business owner with 15 years in the community (C11) highlighted a specific gap, which was a lack of information:

“I do not even remember being told what number to use when reporting corruption.”

A health worker who had served the community for 12 years (C13) also expressed doubt about the existence of reporting procedures:

“No one explains the processes and rules of reporting corruption in the municipality. I doubt those rules even exist.”

A local NGO representative with 10 years of experience had some knowledge of an existing document, but expressed scepticism about its implementation:

“I know there is an anti-corruption strategy document that the municipality drafted a few years back, but I know that it is just there for decoration.”

This lack of awareness highlighted a significant gap in communication between this local authority and community members regarding available resources and strategies to combat corruption. According to Transparency International (2018), effective anti-corruption measures require not only robust policies, but also active engagement with the community to ensure awareness and participation.

5.3.4.5 Fear of retaliation

Fear of retaliation emerged prominently as a factor that drove corruption as the participants all reflected on the pervasive nature of anxiety regarding the consequences should one speak out against corruption. According to the literature, fear of retaliation is a significant barrier that discourages individuals from reporting corruption and wrongdoing within organisations and public institutions, and this fear can stem from various concerns, including potential job loss, demotion, harassment, or social ostracism (Isabirye & Moloji, 2023). Many community members articulated their concerns about the potential repercussions of reporting unethical behaviour, and these responses illustrated that fear can serve as a significant barrier to accountability. A local business owner (C11), who had been in the community for 15 years, expressed this concern as follows:

“I’ve heard stories of people who tried to report corruption only to face harassment or lose their jobs. It makes you think twice before saying anything.”

This comment encapsulated the real and perceived risks individuals faced when they considered exposing corrupt practices in the study area. Miceli et al., (2008) argues that the apprehension surrounding retaliation not only silences individuals, but also perpetuates a culture of impunity. When people believe that speaking up could result in personal harm, whether through job loss, harassment, or threats, the likelihood of reporting corrupt activities diminishes significantly. A retired government employee (C17), with 25 years of experience, reinforced this sentiment by stating the following:

“Even if I see something wrong happening, I worry about what might happen to me or my family if I speak up. It’s just not worth the risk.”

This perspective highlighted the complex interplay between personal safety and ethical responsibility, illustrating how fear led to inaction even in the face of clear wrongdoing. The implications of this fear are profound. When individuals feel unsafe should they report corruption, the cycle of unethical behaviour is perpetuated, as perpetrators begin to operate

with a sense of impunity. This dynamic not only undermines trust in public institutions, but also erodes the integrity associated with local governance as a whole (Transparency International, 2020). Therefore, without a robust mechanism for protecting whistleblowers, communities may find themselves trapped in a culture where corruption thrives unchallenged.

5.4 Municipal Employees' Perceptions and Experiences of Corruption

5.4.1 Perception on the understanding the nature of corruption

The discussions with the iNdumiso municipal workers revealed a nuanced understanding of corruption and its far-reaching implications for service delivery. These participants clearly acknowledged the presence of corruption within the municipality, and they also indicated a troubling tendency to overlook or normalise this issue, which most argued significantly undermined their efforts to serve the community effectively. The public relations officer (M1) articulated this complexity as follows:

“Corruption is not just about money; it’s about how resources are misallocated. We often see funds intended for community projects being diverted elsewhere. For example, there was supposed to be an upgrade to our local clinic, but due to corrupt dealings, those funds seem to have vanished. It’s frustrating because we know how much the community relies on these services.”

This statement highlighted the systemic nature of corruption in the iNdumiso Municipality and emphasised that it extended beyond financial misappropriation to encompass the misallocation of resources that were critical for the community’s well-being. When funds earmarked for essential services like healthcare disappear, the repercussions are felt acutely by residents who depend on these services for their quality of life (Gupta et al., 2002). The Infrastructure Manager (M8) added the following:

“It’s disheartening to witness how some officials prioritise personal gain over community welfare. When contracts are awarded based on connections rather than merit, it compromises the quality of the services we can provide. We want to serve our community effectively, but these corrupt practices undermine our efforts.”

This participant’s perspective underscored a broader recognition that corruption not only impacted specific projects, but also eroded trust in public institutions. When community members perceive some decisions are made based on favouritism rather than merit, it

diminishes their confidence in the system and its ability to deliver on promises (Pilusa, 2024). The insights shared by these municipal workers illustrated a critical understanding of the multifaceted nature of corruption. They recognised that corruption manifests not only through overt acts of bribery, but also through systemic issues such as nepotism and mismanagement of resources. From a theoretical perspective, the findings can be interpreted through both Rational Choice Theory and Principal–Agent Theory. Rational Choice Theory suggests that corrupt officials weigh personal gain against the perceived risk of punishment; in contexts like iNdumiso, weak oversight mechanisms make corruption a rational (though unethical) choice. Principal–Agent Theory also applies, as municipal officials (agents) entrusted with public resources often act in self-interest rather than in the interest of citizens (principals), exploiting information asymmetry and accountability gaps. These dynamics create conditions in which corruption becomes entrenched and self-perpetuating.

This awareness is vital for fostering a collective response to corruption, as it encourages a culture of accountability and transparency within a municipality. However, the tendency to overlook or accept corruption as a norm poses significant challenges and, among other things, it suggests a need for increased awareness-raising initiatives to empower community members to confront corruption actively (Isabirye and Moloji, 2023). Educational campaigns that clarify the impacts of corruption on service delivery and highlight the importance of ethical governance can play a pivotal role in shifting such perceptions.

5.4.2 Lived Realities of Corruption and Service Delivery

5.4.1.1 Resource misallocation

The municipal workers expressed significant frustration over the misallocation of resources due to corrupt practices, and highlighted the detrimental impact this corrupt practice had on community development and service delivery. Resource misallocation is a critical issue that significantly impacts economic performance and productivity across various sectors. It occurs when resources such as labour, capital, and raw materials are not distributed optimally among firms or industries, leading to inefficiencies that hinder overall economic growth (Pilusa, 2024). Corruption is often a key driver of resource misallocation, as it distorts the allocation process by favouring well-connected individuals or firms over those that are more efficient or productive (Monkam, 2014). The Municipal Infrastructure Manager (M8) articulated this concern as follows:

“We often hear about funds allocated for community projects, but when you look

around, nothing changes. For instance, there was supposed to be a new school built for our children, but the money seems to have disappeared somewhere along the way. It's disheartening to see resources diverted while we struggle to meet community needs."

The frustration expressed by the participants pointed to a broader systemic issue where the diversion of funds not only hindered specific projects, but also undermined the overall trust in this public institution. When resources intended for critical services like education are

mismanaged, it creates a cycle of unmet needs and growing community dissatisfaction (Reinikka & Svensson, 2004). The Financial Officer (M6) cautiously added the following:

“It’s a challenge when we know what our community needs, but there are layers of bureaucracy and influence that complicate matters. We want to do our jobs well, but corruption can overshadow genuine efforts.”

This acknowledgment of bureaucratic complexities reflected the difficulties some public servants faced in navigating a system where corrupt practices impeded effective service delivery. According to the literature, layers of corrupt influence can create an environment where ethical conduct is overshadowed by personal interests, which further complicates the ability to allocate resources where they are most needed (Mabeba, 2021). The latter author notes that corruption leads to significant losses in financial resources intended for public services, and argues that the misallocation of funds not only represents a loss of financial capital, but also translates into tangible detriments for communities that rely on these services. When funds are siphoned off for personal gain, it not only affects specific projects, but also contributes to a broader erosion of public trust in local governance (Mabeba, 2021).

5.4.1.2 Delayed and incomplete projects

The iNdumiso Municipality officials expressed deep concern over how corruption had led to significant delays in essential projects, and they argued that this had negatively impacted community welfare. The Financial Officer (M6) shared a concerning example of project delays:

“The new water supply system was promised to us two years ago, but because of various challenges, some of which I can’t discuss, it’s still not operational. Families are relying on unsafe water sources because someone decided to pocket the funds meant for our community.”

This statement underscored the dire consequences of corruption in the study area, as it not only delayed vital infrastructure projects, but also placed the health and safety of community members at risk. The finding of the reliance on unsafe water sources is a tangible reminder of how corrupt practices can have life-threatening implications for vulnerable populations. In this context, the HR Manager (M3) stated:

“Every time we hear about a new project starting, there’s a sense of cautious optimism; however, we know that delays are common due to various factors, including mismanagement and other issues that are often beyond our control.”

This comment highlighted the pervasive sense of scepticism among the municipal workers regarding project timelines and a lack of accountability. The anticipation of new initiatives was seemingly frequently tempered by the reality of previous delays, and this fostered a culture of doubt that possibly further discouraged community engagement and trust in this public institution. Research supports these observations, indicating that corruption often results in project delays and incomplete initiatives (Nethengwe et al., 2023). When funds are misallocated or mismanaged, not only do projects fail to materialise as promised, but the overall capacity of municipal authorities to deliver essential services is compromised. This cycle of delay and incompleteness not only frustrates diligent municipal workers, but also alienates community members who depend on these services for their daily lives (Pilusa, 2024).

5.4.1.3 Compromised quality of services

It was evident that the prevalence of corruption in the iNdumiso Municipality had far-reaching implications not only for the timeliness of services, but also for their overall quality. The municipal workers voiced their concerns about how corrupt practices directly undermined the effectiveness of service delivery. The Town Planner (M1) highlighted the issue of contract awarding based on favouritism:

“When contracts are awarded based on favouritism rather than merit, we sometimes end up with poor quality work. The roads that were supposed to be repaired are now worse than before because contractors may cut corners.”

When decision-making processes prioritised personal connections over qualifications, the resulting work was substandard, leading to further deterioration of public infrastructure. In this regard, the HR Manager (M3) stated:

“I’ve seen infrastructure projects struggle because they were handed to contractors who might not have been the best fit for the job due to personal connections rather than qualifications.”

The Environmental Officer (M5) lamented the use of cheap materials:

“Whenever cheap materials are used for service provision, there is going to be a need for repairs each and every year. The municipality tends to award tenders to people who only care about benefiting rather than proving quality services. They buy the cheapest materials so they can gain more profit, resulting in poor quality services.”

The above sentiments underscored the prevalence of systemic problems in the procurement process, where the lack of transparency and accountability resulted in contracts being awarded to unqualified individuals or firms. The consequences of these decisions were undoubtedly felt by the community, who rightfully relied on quality services and infrastructure for their daily needs. Sebake and Sebola (2014) support this finding, stating that nepotism and irregularities in procurement processes lead to substandard service provision. When public resources are mismanaged in this way, it not only results in financial waste, but also erodes public trust in the local government institution, and the community begins to perceive that their needs are secondary to the interests of a few, which fosters cynicism and disengagement.

5.4.1.4 Erosion of public trust

The participants argued that the pervasive nature of corruption in iNdumiso Municipality had led to the significant erosion of trust between municipal workers and the community. This disconnection is deeply troubling, as trust is fundamental to effective governance and community engagement (Isabirye & Moloji, 2023). The Public Relations Officer (M7) articulated the challenge of maintaining credibility:

“It’s hard for us to maintain credibility when we know that some practices undermine our efforts. When officials make promises that aren’t kept due to various challenges—including corruption—it damages our relationship with the community.”

This observation underscored the dual burden faced by those municipal workers who were committed to serving their community, yet found themselves entangled in a system that often prioritised personal gain over public service. The HR Manager (M3) echoed this sentiment as follows:

“We genuinely care about serving our community; however, when people see corruption happening around them or hear rumours about mismanagement, it makes it difficult for us to build trust.”

This finding highlights how corruption creates an atmosphere of scepticism and doubt. Even dedicated municipal employees can struggle to foster positive relationships with residents when the community is saturated with negative perceptions of governance. Research by Transparency International (2013) supports this sentiment, noting that widespread corruption undermines citizens' confidence in public institutions on a global scale. When communities

become aware that municipal officials are engaged in corrupt practices, their trust in the integrity and effectiveness of local governance is diminished. This erosion of trust can lead to disengagement, as community members feel disempowered and lose their inclination to participate in civic activities or advocate for their needs (Bardhan, 1997).

5.4.1.5 Lack of equitable access to basic services

It was also evident that corruption in iNdumiso Municipality had led to significant disparities in access to essential services, and that this had exacerbated existing inequalities within the community. Equitable access to services is a critical issue that underpins human development, inclusive economic growth, and the fight against persistent inequalities (Pilusa, 2024). This means that the fair and just distribution of essential public services such as healthcare, education, water, and sanitation is necessary to ensure that all individuals, regardless of their socioeconomic status, geographic location, gender, or ethnicity, have access to the services that are their constitutional right. In this regard, the Town Planner (M1) stated:

“If you have money or know someone in power, you can get things done quickly like getting your electricity connected or having your waste removed regularly; [but] those without connections often face delays.”

This statement illustrated the systemic inequity that arose from corrupt practices, implying that access to services were contingent on personal connections or financial resources rather than on need and fairness. The Infrastructure Manager (M8) added:

“It’s frustrating when we see certain individuals receiving preferential treatment while others struggle for basic services. It raises questions about fairness and equity in service delivery.”

This sentiment highlighted the moral dilemma faced by those municipal workers who were committed to serving their community, yet had to witness the stark contrast in service delivery outcomes based on corruption. When favouritism dictates access to essential services, it not only undermines the principles of equity and justice, but also fosters resentment and disillusionment among those who are marginalised, as affirmed by Corruption Watch (2020). The latter organisation argues that vulnerable communities often bear the brunt of corrupt practices that deny them access to basic services. When public resources are mismanaged or allocated based on corrupt relationships, those most in need, such as low-income families or marginalised groups, often find themselves further disadvantaged. This not only perpetuates

the cycle of poverty, but also erodes trust in public institutions, as affected individuals feel powerless to advocate for their rights (Corruption Watch, 2023).

5.4.2 Forms of corruption highlighted by the municipal workers

5.4.2.1 Bribery

The workers noted that bribery was commonly used to expedite services within the municipality, but most exercised caution when they referred to this factor. Rose-Ackerman (1999) states that a lack of service delivery due to bribery can hinder socio-economic development. Also, without proper access to healthcare, education, clean water, and other essential services, communities struggle to improve their quality of life and break free from the cycle of poverty. Bribery can have an adverse impact on service delivery and result in inefficient resource allocation, poor service quality, and the loss of public trust, while it can also serve as a barrier to development. Therefore, rather than positions and opportunities being awarded based on skills, qualifications, and experience, they may be obtained through connections and bribes (Rose-Ackerman, 1999). The Human Resources Manager (M3) stated:

“People know they can pay a little extra to get things done faster; it’s frustrating for those who follow the rules. I’ve seen colleagues accept bribes just to push paperwork through; it undermines all our hard work.”

The Water and Sanitation Officer (M4) added the following:

“Bribery has become so normalised in some circles that many don’t even see it as wrong anymore; they think it’s just how things are done around here.”

M7 stated:

“The phrase ‘nothing for mahala’ is fit to explain how bribery works in our municipality.”

These sentiments reflected a cultural shift that allowed corrupt practices not only to be accepted, but to be expected. When bribery becomes an ingrained part of the municipal system, it fosters cynicism among those who adhere to ethical guidelines, ultimately damaging the integrity of these local public institutions. Transparency International's Global Corruption Barometer (2020) states that this form of corruption is one of the most frequent interactions citizens have with public officials. The latter report indicates that many citizens encounter bribery in their dealings with public servants, which further entrenches the perception that corruption is an unavoidable aspect of interacting with government institutions. This cycle

perpetuates a lack of trust in public officials and can lead to widespread disengagement from civic participation.

5.4.2.2 Nepotism

Evidence showed that nepotism in iNdumiso Municipality significantly influenced hiring practices, as personal relationships were reportedly often prioritised over merit-based qualifications. This practice not only raised ethical concerns among the participants, but also had detrimental effects on the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the services rendered to the public. The Internal Auditor's (M2) comments highlighted this issue:

“I’ve seen qualified candidates overlooked because they didn’t have connections; this leads to inefficiency and poor service delivery overall.”

The Infrastructure Manager (M8) also reflected on the disheartening reality of compromised hiring standards:

“While I can’t speak about specific cases openly, it’s disheartening when we bring in people who are not qualified simply because they are related to someone in power; this creates a culture where mediocrity is accepted.”

These comments underscored the pervasive sense of frustration among the employees who were committed to serving their community but found themselves working alongside individuals whose qualifications were questionable at best. The normalisation of mediocrity evidently not only undermined the capabilities of the municipality, but also diminished the overall morale of dedicated workers who strove for excellence. Research has indicated that nepotism leads to inefficiency and diminishes accountability (Mabeba, 2021). When positions are filled based on personal connections rather than competency, the potential for innovative solutions and effective governance is stifled. This inefficiency can manifest in various ways, including delays in service delivery, subpar project execution, and a lack of responsiveness to the community's needs.

According to Mabeda (2021), nepotism can manifest in various ways, including the hiring of family members in key positions or the promotion of individuals based on personal connections rather than performance. This not only compromises the quality of public services, but can also create a sense of entitlement among those hired through nepotistic channels. In this context, the HR Manager (M3) articulated the following:

“It’s frustrating to see people getting promotions they didn’t earn, as it creates a divide among employees and a lack of trust in management.”

The prevalence of mediocrity can demotivate qualified employees who strive for excellence and foster a work environment that lacks innovation and responsiveness. Moreover, nepotism can also foster a culture of entitlement among those hired through connections, which further perpetuates the cycle of complacency and corruption. When employees believe their positions are secure regardless of their lack of performance, the incentive to engage in ethical practices and work diligently is diminished.

5.4.2.3 Procurement irregularities

The issue of procurement irregularities in iNdumiso Municipality was a significant concern among the municipal workers, who observed that favouritism often superseded fair competition in the awarding of contracts. Many employees referred to such instances with caution, which reflected their awareness of the delicate nature of the issue and the threat of exposing it. The Legal Advisor (M9) expressed frustration regarding the procurement process:

“We have companies getting contracts without proper qualifications just because they’re friends with someone in power. This compromises the quality of work we receive.”

The procurement process should always be transparent and competitive to ensure that the best-qualified contractors are selected to execute public projects (Isabirye & Moloi, 2023). However, many workers expressed a sense of inevitability about who would receive contracts. The Town Planner (M1) stated:

“It feels like every time there’s a new project announced, we already know who will get the contract. It’s always the same few companies with connections who benefit.”

This sentiment reflected a troubling cycle of favouritism and nepotism that not only undermined the integrity of the procurement process, but also led to a lack of accountability in service delivery. The consequences of procurement irregularities are far-reaching. When contracts are awarded based on relationships rather than qualifications, the quality of the work that is done often suffers (Ambe & Badenhorst-Weiss, 2012). The municipal workers agreed that substandard performances by favoured contractors resulted in delays, cost overruns, and poor outcomes for the community. The Water and Sanitation Officer (M6) articulated this

concern as follows:

“We’ve seen projects fail because they were handed to companies that weren’t capable of delivering. It’s frustrating for us, as we want to see our community thrive.”

The normalisation of such nepotistic practices fosters an environment of distrust among municipal workers and community members alike. When the procurement process lacks transparency, it erodes public confidence in local government and leads to cynicism regarding the intentions of officials (Ambe & Badenhorst-Weiss, 2012). This disconnect can discourage community members from engaging with public services, thus further exacerbating the challenges faced by a municipality.

5.4.2.4 Embezzlement

Embezzlement emerged as a significant concern that was expressed by the iNdumiso Municipality workers, who were apprehensive about the misappropriation of funds meant for community projects. The participants trod carefully around this issue and they avoided referring to specific instances, which reflected both the sensitivity of the issue and their fear of repercussions. The Public Relations Officer (M7) expressed this apprehension as follows:

“We’ve had cases where funds meant for community projects went missing—millions are unaccounted for without any explanation or accountability.”

The implications of embezzlement extended beyond mere financial losses as they exerted tangible effects on service delivery and community trust. The Infrastructure Manager (M3) added the following regarding this concern:

“When you see infrastructure projects being abandoned halfway through due to lack of funds or misappropriation, it raises suspicions about what really happened.”

The above observations highlighted the direct impact of embezzlement on the community, as abandoned projects not only wasted resources, but also left residents without essential services, and this scenario bred disillusionment among honourable municipal workers and community members who felt that their needs were overlooked while funds were siphoned off. The literature supports these claims, indicating that embezzlement is a common issue in local governments where oversight is weak (Kaufmann and Kraay, 1997). In environments where financial controls are inadequate, the risk of embezzlement increases significantly and allows unscrupulous individuals to exploit systemic vulnerabilities for personal gain. Moreover, the

lack of oversight creates a culture of impunity, and those responsible for managing public funds may feel emboldened to act without fear of any adverse consequences.

5.4.2.5 Abuse of power

The abuse of power by some officials working in the targeted municipality was a significant concern among the participants, who expressed deep apprehension about the ways in which authority was misused for personal gain. They approached this sensitive topic delicately, which indicated a deep awareness of the risks involved in discussing this matter. The Human Resources Officer (M2) articulated the chilling idea of reporting corruption to a higher authority:

“I’ve seen officials use their authority for personal gain in ways that make employees feel intimidated if they try to report corrupt practices. This creates an environment where people feel powerless.”

This observation reflected the chilling effect that the abuse of power had on workplace dynamics, as it fostered a culture of fear and silence among law-abiding employees who might otherwise have spoken out against any unethical behaviour. The power dynamics within the municipality thus seemed to create a challenging environment for those who wished to uphold work ethics and their integrity. The Compliance Officer (M10) shared the following experience:

“...you go into a meeting and feel pressured into agreeing with unethical decisions just because someone is higher up—it’s abuse of power at its worst.”

The Financial Analyst (M8) added:

“You learn quickly that it’s easier to stay quiet than to risk your job by speaking up.”

These statements illustrated that hierarchical structures led to coercion, and some individuals felt compelled to compromise their values to conform to the expectations and coercive manipulation by those in authority. Such situations not only undermined their ethical standards, but also eroded their morale and trust in those in power. Research has indicated that abuse of power is often linked to other forms of corruption and significantly undermines public trust in local governance (De Graaf, 2007). When officials prioritise personal gain over the community’s welfare, it fosters a perception that the system is rigged in favour of the powerful. This can deter community members from engaging with public institutions and further deepens the disconnect between officials and the citizens they serve. Moreover, the normalisation of

power abuse can perpetuate a cycle of corruption; hence, unethical practices become entrenched within the organisational culture (Ambe & Badenhorst-Weiss, 2012). In such conditions, employees become reluctant to challenge decisions or question authority as they believe that doing so will jeopardise their positions or lead to retaliation (Ambe & Badenhorst-Weiss, 2012).

5.5 Summary of the Participants' Views on the Drivers of Corruption

Several recurring drivers of corruption emerged from the comments by the municipal workers and the community members. These drivers were categorised into distinct themes based on the patterns observed in the data.

Table 5.3: Key drivers of corruption as identified by the participants

Drivers of Corruption	Description	Frequency of Reference	Percentage of Reference (n=18) %
Nepotism	Favouritism shown by hiring family members or friends over qualified candidates	15	83
Embezzlement	Misappropriation of funds meant for public services, leading to financial losses	14	78
Lack of Accountability	Absence of proper oversight and responsibility, leading to unchecked misuse of resources	13	72
Bribery and Kickbacks	Acceptance of illegal payments or incentives in exchange for favourable decisions	11	61
Unauthorized Procurement	Bypassing established procedures for procurement, leading to fraud and substandard services	10	56
Inefficient Bureaucracy	Complex and slow administrative processes that create opportunities for corruption	9	50
Lack of Transparency	Failure to provide clear and open information about financial and administrative processes	8	44
Abuse of Power	Use of official positions for personal gain or to influence outcomes unfairly	7	39
Political Patronage	Using political connections to secure jobs, contracts, or benefits	6	33

Fraudulent Reporting	Providing false or misleading information in official reports and records	6	33
Collusion	Cooperation between officials and external entities to manipulate or defraud	5	28%
Bribery of Officials	Offering bribes to government officials to obtain favours or expedite processes	5	28%
Lack of protection of whistleblowers	Insufficient protection for those who report corruption, discouraging reporting	4	22%
Ineffective Internal Controls	Weak internal control systems that fail to detect or prevent corruption	4	22%
Conflict of Interest	Situations in which personal interests conflict with official duties, leading to biased decisions	3	17%
Political Interference	Political entities exerting undue influence on municipal operations and decisions	3	17%
Misuse of Discretionary Powers	Using discretionary authority inappropriately to benefit personal or vested interests	3	17%

Source: Researcher's summary

5.5.1 Institutional factors

5.5.1.1 The lack of social accountability among local municipality leaders:

Social accountability is accepted as a means to address inefficiencies in the public health system, to enhance planning and service delivery, and to assist in achieving the highest levels of service delivery. One of the key themes that emerged from the data was the lack of social accountability. When officials are not held accountable for their actions, they are likely to engage in corrupt behaviour. This can be caused by a lack of oversight, inadequate laws and regulations, or a culture of impunity (Isabirye & Moloji, 2023). The Municipal Finance Officer (M4) candidly corroborated this sentiment:

“So, I've been working in the municipality for a while now, and I have to say, the lack of accountability here is staggering. I mean, it's like, if you're connected to the right people, you can get away with anything. Like, I've seen colleagues embezzle funds and get away with it. Or, they'll hire their relatives for positions without even following the proper recruitment process. And if you try to speak up, you're just shut down.”

A number of participants believed that corruption occurred as a result of a lack of accountability. This finding is consistent with the literature, which suggests that social accountability is essential for addressing inefficiencies in the public health system to enhance planning and service delivery (Meyer and Venter, 2014). Many public institutions lack the ability and resources for efficient debt management or to collect unpaid rates. These financial difficulties have, for many years, led to a situation where local governments have become a burden for the state, which is a situation that is difficult to resolve (Isabirye & Moloji, 2023). In support of this view, the Infrastructure Manager (M6) recounted the following personal experience:

“I remember this one time I saw a colleague using a municipal vehicle for personal errands. And when I tried to report it, I was just told to ‘let it go’. Like, what's the point of even having rules if no one is going to follow them?”

5.5.1.2 Absence of oversight mechanisms

When there are no robust mechanisms for oversight, some local municipality leaders engage in corrupt activities without fear of detection or consequence. Social accountability mechanisms, such as public audits, regular reporting, and transparency measures, ensure that officials' actions are scrutinised and that there are systems in place to investigate and address allegations of corruption (Isabirye & Moloji, 2023). The Infrastructure Manager (M3) expressed some concerns in this regards as follows:

“In this municipality, the lack of regular financial audits allowed officials to embezzle funds from community projects. Without public access to budgetary reports and the absence of external oversight, these officials were able to misappropriate resources meant for public services without being caught.”

Clearly, the lack of routine audits created opportunities for financial misconduct and allowed officials to exploit vulnerabilities in the system. The inability to monitor financial transactions led to the misappropriation of funds that were crucial for community development. When budgetary information is not accessible to the public, it becomes nearly impossible for citizens to hold their leaders accountable for how public funds are utilized; therefore, without independent oversight bodies, there is little deterrent against corrupt practices, and this situation allows unethical behaviour to proliferate unchecked (Monkam, 2014).

5.5.1.3 Limited public participation

When citizens have limited opportunities to participate in governance processes, there is little or no public pressure on officials to act ethically. Social accountability is fostered through mechanisms that enable public involvement, such as public consultations, town hall meetings, and participatory budgeting (Monkam, 2014). In corroboration of the literature, the Municipal Manager (M3) stated:

“Public forums for residents to voice concerns or offer feedback on municipal projects are rarely held, reducing public engagement and oversight. This lack of public participation allows officials to pursue [their] personal agendas without accountability.”

5.5.1.4 Corruption as a self-perpetuating cycle

When social accountability mechanisms are weak, corruption can become institutionalised. Leaders who engage in corrupt practices without fear of accountability may encourage similar behaviour among their subordinates, thus creating a cycle of corruption. A culture of corruption also emerges when new officials learn from their predecessors that corrupt practices are tolerated, which leads to widespread and entrenched corruption within the municipal administration system (Ambe & Badenhorst-Weiss, 2012). The issue of corrupt managers who took bribes was a critical finding, as it set the tone for corruption and undermined accountability. The workers’ comments in this regard highlighted the significance of leadership in promoting a culture of corruption, or curbing it. When managers engaged in corrupt practices, it sent a message to other employees that such behaviour was acceptable, as argued by the Finance Officer (M4):

“But what about the managers who take bribes? They're the ones who set the example.”

Kotter (2001) suggests that leadership plays a crucial role in shaping organisational culture and promoting ethical behaviour, arguing that managers who engage in corrupt practices create an environment in which corruption can thrive, while other employees may feel pressured to follow suit.

5.5.1.5 Poor governance due to a lack of transparency

Transparency ensures that government actions and decisions are open to public scrutiny. Without transparency, there is a lack of oversight, which often enables corrupt practices to go

undetected, or unreported (Transparency International, 2020). When officials are not held accountable for their actions due to a lack of transparency, they are likely to persist in corrupt activities for personal gain; hence, transparency ensures that government officials' actions and decisions are open to public scrutiny. Without transparency, there is a lack of oversight, which is a breeding ground for corrupt practices to go undetected. When officials are not held accountable for their actions due to lack of transparency, they are highly likely to engage in corrupt activities for personal gain (Transparency International, 2020). This point was raised by the Finance Officer who stated the following:

“The lack of transparency in the contract awarding process has allowed for corrupt practices to take place. Without clear guidelines and public oversight, officials have been able to award contracts to companies owned by friends or family members, rather than selecting the most qualified and cost-effective vendors. This not only undermined fair competition, but also resulted in inflated costs and subpar services for our municipality. The lack of transparency in budget allocation and expenditure has led to mismanagement of public funds. Without clear reporting mechanisms and public disclosure of financial information, there have been instances where funds meant for important projects or services were siphoned off for personal gain. This not only hampered the delivery of essential services to residents, but also eroded public trust in our municipality's financial integrity.”

The Legal Advisor corroborated the above point:

“Transparency is crucial in land use and zoning decisions to ensure that development projects are carried out in the best interest of the community. In cases where these processes were not transparent, there were instances of officials accepting bribes or favours from developers to expedite permits or change zoning regulations in their favour. This compromised the integrity of our municipality's planning processes and led to haphazard, unsustainable development.”

5.5.2 Socio-economic factors

5.5.2.1 Low salaries for municipal employees

The data consistently revealed that low salaries contributed to corruption among public officials. The literature also argues that, when employees are not paid a living wage, they may feel desperate and are likely to engage in corrupt activities to supplement their income such as

accepting bribes, extorting money from citizens, or engaging in other forms of corrupt behaviour (Auditor-General South Africa, 2022). Furthermore, low salaries can undermine accountability and transparency within the municipality. When employees are not paid enough to support themselves and their families, they may also feel less accountable to the public and more focused on personal gain.

The consequences of low salaries on municipal services are far-reaching. When employees are not motivated or incentivised to perform their duties, the quality of services suffers, and this can lead to a range of problems, including delayed or inadequate service delivery, poor maintenance of public infrastructure, and a lack of responsiveness to citizens' needs (World Bank, 2018). Moreover, low salaries can create a culture of corruption within the municipality, and acts of corrupt behaviour may eventually be seen as acceptable (Van Rijckeghem & Weder, 2001). This can perpetuate a cycle of corruption and mistrust while undermining the legitimacy of the municipality and eroding public confidence. M6, the Financial Officer, highlighted the impact of low salaries on municipal services:

“For example, one of my colleagues, let's call her Nomsa, is a single mother who earns R 8 000 per month. She has two children to support and her salary is barely enough to cover their basic needs. She has to resort to accepting bribes from contractors to make ends meet. Another colleague, Themba, is a skilled engineer who earns R 12 000 per month. However, he has to support an extended family of 10 people. He has to take bribes from developers to supplement his income.”

It is noteworthy that a significant proportion of the participating employees (80%) believed that low salaries contributed to corrupt practices in the municipality under study.

5.5.2.2 Corruption in the workplace

Another sentiment that was expressed by some employees (20%) was that corruption occurred as a result of greed rather than low salaries. Some employees expressed frustration and desperation as they felt that they might be forced to engage in corrupt practices due to their low salaries. Others, however, emphasised the need for personal integrity and accountability, suggesting that corruption was a choice rather than a necessity. For instance, the Public Relations Officer (M7) expressed a nuanced perspective on the relationship between low salaries and corrupt practices:

“I don't think it's just about the low salaries. I think some people are just greedy and want more.”

This finding highlights the complexity of the issue of corruption in the workplace. It may be argued that, while low salaries may contribute to an environment in which corruption can thrive, this issue still does not excuse or justify corrupt behaviour. Moreover, it clearly emerged that a combination of factors, including personal values (or a lack thereof), a workplace culture that condones corruption, and economic pressures contributed to the prevalence of corruption in the municipality under study.

5.5.3 Political instability

It further emerged that socio-economic factors that contributed to political instability, such as economic crises or social unrest, also encouraged corrupt behaviours. The literature agrees, arguing that in unstable political environments governance structures may become more prone to corruption due to weakened oversight and accountability measures (Ambe & Badenhorst-Weiss, 2012). M8, the Infrastructure Manager at iNdumiso Municipality, provided a vivid account of how political instability led to corruption:

“I have seen some crazy stuff working for the municipality. When politics gets messy, it's like the Wild West. People start doing their own thing, and nobody's really in charge. I've got co-workers who just go along with whatever, even if it's shady, because they don't want to make waves. And it's not just about getting ahead - it's about getting by. When the system's broken, people do what they gotta do. I've seen folks in the community get taken advantage of by corrupt officials, and it's just not right.”

The findings affirmed that the link between political instability and corruption is complex and multifaceted. For instance, even political instability created an environment that was conducive to corruption, as a weakened governance structure and a lack of effective oversight mechanisms allowed corrupt practices to flourish. The literature argues that economic crises, social unrest, and widespread poverty can also contribute to corruption, as individuals and groups seek to exploit weaknesses in the system for personal gain (Reinikka & Svensson, 2004). Corruption, in turn, can exacerbate political instability as it will erode trust in a government system and even fuel social unrest. When citizens lose faith in their government's ability to provide basic services and accept accountability, they are highly likely to protest or even revolt.

5.6 Measures to Curb Corruption

Effective anti-corruption measures are pivotal in promoting transparency, accountability, and integrity in the municipal governance system. This section will examine the approaches employed by iNdumiso Municipality to combat corruption. The discourse will analyse the effectiveness of these measures and compare them to broader theoretical and empirical literature on anti-corruption strategies. The discussion is structured around four key sub-themes: policy and legislative frameworks, institutional reforms and capacity building, community engagement and participation, and anti-corruption agencies and oversight bodies.

5.6.1 Policy and legislative frameworks

The examination of anti-corruption policies and legislative frameworks pertaining to iNdumiso Municipality a commitment to addressing corruption through formal mechanisms. The municipality had reportedly developed and adopted several policies aimed at curbing corrupt practices, such as adherence to the Local Government Anti-Corruption Act and the National Anti-Corruption Framework. These documents outline the principles of transparency, accountability, and ethical behaviour and mandate municipal officials to adhere to these frameworks.

M2, the Internal Auditor at iNdumiso Municipality, provided a critical perspective on the effectiveness of the municipality's adherence to anti-corruption policies and legislative frameworks:

“Honestly, as someone who works in the iNdumiso Municipality, I think our anti-corruption policies and legislative frameworks are just a bunch of fancy words on paper. We've got rules and regulations in place, but they're not being enforced. I've seen colleagues and supervisors bend the rules or outright ignore them, and nothing's ever done about it. We need more than just policies - we need real consequences for those who abuse their power. And we need transparency, so everyone can see how our resources are being used. Until then, these policies are just a waste of time.”

Clearly, in the view of a key financial auditor, the effectiveness of relevant policies was compromised by implementation challenges. Interviews with other municipal officials and a review of pertinent documents indicated that, while policies were in place, their implementation and enforcement were inconsistent. For instance, while the Local Government Anti-Corruption Act provides a robust legal framework for combating corruption, its practical

implementation seemed to fall short due to bureaucratic inefficiencies and a lack of local adaptation.

M4, the Water and Sanitation Officer at iNdumiso Municipality, expressed significant concerns about the effectiveness of anti-corruption policies and their implementation:

“I have worked in the iNdumiso Municipality for over a decade, and I've seen anti-corruption policies come and go. But the truth is, they're not being implemented effectively. We need training and resources to help us identify and report corruption, but we're not getting them. And when we do report something, it's like throwing a stone into a black hole - nothing happens. Our legislative frameworks are weak, and our leaders are more interested in protecting their own interests than in serving the community. It's time for real change, not just more empty promises.”

The limitations in policy enforcement observed in iNdumiso Municipality also reflected the broader challenges that are highlighted in the literature. For instance, Kpundeh (1998) suggests that the gap between policy formulation and implementation is a common issue in many municipalities where formal frameworks are often not supported by the necessary mechanisms for effective execution. In iNdumiso, although anti-corruption policies theoretically provided a strong foundation, their practical application was hindered by inadequate resources and a lack of follow-through measures.

5.6.2 Institutional reforms and capacity building

In iNdumiso Municipality, institutional reforms and capacity-building efforts aimed to strengthen the municipality's ability to combat corruption. Recent reforms included the establishment of an anti-corruption unit and the reorganisation of municipal departments to improve oversight and integrity. Additionally, the municipality invested in training programs designed to educate staff about anti-corruption practices and ethical behaviour. However, the HR Manager was sceptical about the effectiveness of recent institutional reforms and capacity-building efforts aimed at combating corruption:

“While the institutional reforms and capacity-building efforts are a step in the right direction, I'm not convinced they're enough to root out corruption in our municipality. We've had training sessions and new policies, but the old guard is still in charge. Until we see real consequences for corrupt behaviour and a change in leadership, I'm sceptical that things will truly change. We need a culture shift, not just a few new rules

and procedures. And we need it to come from the top down, not just from the bottom up.”

Despite its efforts, the effectiveness of the reforms the anti-corruption unit tried to implement was mixed. The introduction of this unit, while a positive step, reportedly faced significant challenges. The municipal employees and the review of institutional reports revealed that the municipality suffered from inadequate resources and unclear mandates, which limited its effectiveness in addressing corruption. This finding is echoed by Huther and Shah (2000), who highlight that successful institutional reforms require not only the establishment of new units, but also the provision of sufficient resources and clear, well-defined roles for these units.

Moreover, capacity-building programs, although well-intentioned, seemed to have had limited impact on reducing corruption. While training sessions were conducted regularly, there was a lack of follow-up mechanisms to assess the application of anti-corruption principles in everyday municipal operations, as was affirmed by some of the participants. As one participant stated, “the training is good, but it feels like we forget everything the moment we step out of the classroom”. The World Bank (2001) conducted research which suggests that capacity-building efforts must be continuous and include mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of training programs.

5.6.3 Community engagement and participation

Community engagement and participation are crucial if transparency and accountability are to be fostered in a local municipality. In iNdumiso Municipality, public awareness campaigns and participatory governance mechanisms were reportedly employed to involve residents in anti-corruption efforts. Public workshops and town hall meetings were conducted to raise awareness about corruption and encourage citizens to participate in governance processes. However, the effectiveness of these community engagement efforts seemed to be limited. The data that emerged from the interviews and observations indicated that public participation in these initiatives was often low, and feedback from the community was not always acted upon. In this context, the Public Relations Officer at iNdumiso Municipality provided valuable insights into the importance of community engagement and participation in their efforts to combat corruption:

“Community engagement and participation are crucial in the fight against corruption in our municipality. Citizens need to be involved in decision-making processes and hold our leaders accountable. I've seen how powerful it can be when we come together to

demand transparency and integrity. We need to continue to build partnerships between community groups, civil society organisations, and local government to ensure that everyone's voice is heard. By working together, we can create a culture of accountability and ensure that our municipality serves the people, not just a select few.”

The situation that was exposed by the current study mirrors the challenges discussed by Cornwall and Coelho (2007), who argue that, while community engagement strategies are essential, their success depends on the genuine involvement of citizens and the responsiveness of municipal authorities to community input. In iNdumiso Municipality, the low attendance at public meetings and the lack of follow-up on community feedback illustrate the gap between the municipality's engagement efforts and effective citizen participation, as discussed in the broader literature on participatory governance (Isabirye & Moloji, 2023).

5.6.4 Anti-corruption agencies and oversight bodies

Anti-corruption agencies and oversight bodies play a critical role in monitoring and investigating corruption. In iNdumiso Municipality, there are established agencies and units responsible for overseeing anti-corruption efforts and investigating corrupt practices. However, according to the participants, the effectiveness of these bodies was constrained by several factors, including limited resources, insufficient authority, and political interference. The data revealed that these bodies faced significant challenges. For example, while the anti-corruption unit was tasked with investigating corruption cases, its effectiveness was undermined by resource constraints and political pressures. Bardhan (1997) similarly highlights that the success of anti-corruption agencies is often hindered by limited resources, political interference, and a lack of independence from political forces. Furthermore, the lack of coordination between different oversight bodies diminishes their effectiveness. Rose-Ackerman (1999) argues that effective anti-corruption efforts require well-coordinated oversight mechanisms that are adequately resourced and free from political influence. In iNdumiso Municipality, the fragmented nature of oversight efforts and the insufficient coordination between agencies are reflective of the broader challenges identified in the literature.

Moreover, anti-corruption approaches in iNdumiso Municipality revealed a complex picture of successes and limitations. While there was evidence of formal anti-corruption policies, institutional reforms, community engagement efforts, and anti-corruption agencies in place,

their effectiveness seemed to be undermined by implementation challenges, resource constraints, and political interference. These findings are consistent with the literature on anti-corruption measures, which highlights the importance of not only establishing formal frameworks, but also ensuring that these frameworks are effectively implemented and supported by adequate resources and political will (Van Rijckeghem & Weder, 2001).

5.7 Solutions for Improved Service Delivery

In response to the identified challenges related to corruption and service delivery in iNdumiso Municipality, both the municipal workers and community members offered a range of recommendations. These recommendations reflect a desire for enhanced institutional integrity, improved transparency, and more effective anti-corruption measures. This section will discuss these proposed solutions in detail, linking them to the broader literature on governance and corruption to provide a comprehensive analysis of potential pathways for improving service delivery in the local government context.

5.7.1 Strengthening institutional accountability

The participants from both groups suggested that strengthening accountability mechanisms would be a crucial step in improving service delivery in iNdumiso Municipality. The municipal workers specifically advocated for clearer roles and responsibilities for anti-corruption units, while the community members emphasised the need for more robust oversight mechanisms to hold officials accountable for their actions.

M1, the Town Planner at iNdumiso Municipality, provided valuable insights into the importance of strengthening institutional capacity and enhancing accountability mechanisms to improve service delivery and combat corruption:

“As someone who works within the municipality, I’ve seen first-hand how weak institutional capacity and a lack of accountability have allowed corruption to take hold. We need robust internal controls and whistleblower protection so that employees like me can speak up without fear of retaliation. Our internal audit unit should have the resources and independence to investigate wrongdoing, and our HR department should take disciplinary action against those who engage in corrupt practices. And let’s be real, our leaders should lead by example - if they’re not held to the highest standards of integrity, how can they expect the rest of us to be? Strengthening institutions and accountability is key to restoring trust and integrity in our municipality.”

The municipal workers collectively recommended that the roles of the anti-corruption unit be better defined and that the unit be provided with adequate resources to perform its functions effectively. The community members suggested the establishment of independent oversight committees to monitor the performance of municipal services and to ensure that officials are held accountable for any lapses in service delivery. The need for strengthened institutional capacity and accountability mechanisms aligns with findings in the broader literature. Treisman (2000) asserts that institutional reforms that clearly define roles and responsibilities are essential for effective anti-corruption efforts. Treisman's (2000) study highlights that well-defined roles within anti-corruption agencies, combined with adequate resources, are fundamental to their success in combating corruption. Moreover, Sundaram and Chowdhury (2014) emphasise that independent oversight mechanisms are effective in enhancing accountability and reducing corruption. The latter research supports the idea that the establishment of independent committees can serve to check the performance of municipal officials and help ensure that service delivery meets community needs.

5.7.2 Improving transparency and citizen engagement

A significant portion of the recommendations by the community members focused on increasing transparency and fostering greater citizen engagement in municipal governance. These participants proposed the implementation of open data platforms for public access to municipal records and the creation of more opportunities for citizens to participate in decision-making processes. These views were echoed by the Infrastructure Manager (M8) who provided insightful comments on the community's desire for increased transparency and citizen engagement in municipal governance:

“Community members want to know what's going on in their community! They want to see budgets and meeting minutes online, in plain language. They want to be able to attend meetings and have their voice heard. They want to know who's making decisions and why, and they want to be able to hold them accountable. Let's use technology to make information more accessible! Let's have regular town hall [meetings] and citizen engagement sessions. Let's make sure everyone has a seat at the table.”

The community members expressed a desire for increased transparency through the creation of an open data portal where municipal records, budgets, and decision-making processes could be accessed by the public. They also advocated for the establishment of regular public forums

and feedback mechanisms where residents could voice their concerns and provide input on municipal policies and projects. These recommendations are supported by the literature on transparency and citizen engagement. For instance, Fox (2015) argues that open data initiatives and public participation are effective tools for improving governance and service delivery. Fox (2015) also indicates that transparency mechanisms, such as open data portals, empower citizens to hold officials accountable and foster a more informed public. Additionally, Arnstein's (1969) theory of citizen participation, which identifies various levels of public engagement from manipulation to citizen control, underscores the importance of creating genuine opportunities for citizens to influence municipal decision-making processes. Arnstein's (1969) model highlights that effective citizen engagement requires more than superficial participation, as it demands meaningful involvement that leads to real changes in policy and practice.

5.7.3 Addressing the socio-economic and political drivers of corruption

The participants identified several socio-economic and political drivers of corruption that need to be addressed to improve service delivery. The municipal workers highlighted the need for socio-economic development programs that target poverty and inequality, while the community members emphasised the influence of political patronage and the need for political reforms. Recommendations included the implementation of socio-economic development programs aimed at reducing poverty and inequality, which were seen as the root causes of corruption. Additionally, the community members called for political reforms to reduce patronage and ensure that municipal appointments and resource allocations will be based on merit rather than political connections. M5, the Environmental Officer, provided a comprehensive perspective on the socio-economic and political drivers of corruption and their impact on service delivery:

“Corruption in our municipality isn't just about greedy individuals, but it is also about the systemic issues that drive it. We need to address the socio-economic and political drivers of corruption, like poverty, inequality, and political instability. When people are struggling to make ends meet, they're more vulnerable to bribery and other forms of corruption. And when our political leaders are more interested in maintaining their power than serving the people, corruption thrives. We need to create economic opportunities, improve access to education and healthcare, and strengthen our democratic institutions. By addressing these underlying issues, we can reduce the incentives for corruption and build a more just and equitable society.”

These recommendations are consistent with the literature on corruption's socio-economic and political drivers. Klitgaard (1988) argues that corruption often thrives in environments of economic inequality and political patronage, and this framework further suggests that addressing these underlying conditions through socio-economic development and political reforms can help eradicate corruption and improve service delivery. Johnston (2005) also supports the need for comprehensive anti-corruption strategies that address both economic and political factors. Johnston's (2002) research proposes that successful anti-corruption efforts must tackle the root causes of corruption, such as poverty and political patronage, in addition to implementing specific anti-corruption measures.

5.7.4 Implementing effective anti-corruption initiatives and monitoring progress

Both the municipal workers and the community members emphasised the need for more effective anti-corruption initiatives and robust mechanisms for monitoring progress. Their recommendations included the development of clear anti-corruption strategies with measurable outcomes and the establishment of regular evaluation processes to assess the effectiveness of these initiatives. The participants also recommended that the municipality should develop comprehensive anti-corruption strategies with clear, measurable objectives and regularly evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies. They also suggested that progress reports be made publicly available to maintain transparency and accountability. The IT specialist at iNdumiso Municipality provided a compelling call to action regarding the need for more effective anti-corruption initiatives and robust mechanisms for monitoring progress:

“Honestly, we need to stop just talking about fighting corruption and actually do something about it. We need to put in place real initiatives that make a difference, like training programs, anonymous tip lines, and regular audits. And then we need to check in regularly to see what's working and what's not. We should be transparent about our progress, so the community can hold us accountable. And if something's not working, we need to be willing to try something new. It's time to stop making excuses and start making real change.”

The literature on anti-corruption initiatives underscores the importance of clear strategies and rigorous monitoring. Harrison and Scorse (2010) argue that successful anti-corruption initiatives require clear objectives, consistent monitoring, and public reporting of progress. Their research highlights that effective anti-corruption efforts are characterised by well-defined

goals, regular evaluations, and transparency in reporting outcomes. Similarly, Mungiu-Pippidi (2013) emphasises that anti-corruption measures must include mechanisms for monitoring and accountability to be effective. Mungiu-Pippidi’s (2013) work supports the idea that comprehensive anti-corruption strategies must be accompanied by robust mechanisms for tracking progress and making adjustments based on performance evaluations. The Town Planner echoed these sentiments as follows:

“I’m tired of seeing the same old promises to fight corruption, only to have things stay the same. We need to get serious about making changes that actually work. That means putting in place real consequences for corrupt behaviour, and rewarding employees who speak up. We need to make it easier for people to report wrongdoing, and actually follow up on those reports. And we need to be transparent about what we’re doing, so the community can see that we’re actually making progress. Let’s stop talking about fighting corruption and start doing it.”

The recommendations provided by the municipal workers and community members offer a multifaceted approach to addressing corruption and improving service delivery in iNdumiso Municipality. These recommendations emphasize the need for strengthening institutional capacity, enhancing transparency, addressing socio-economic and political factors, and implementing effective anti-corruption measures. Strengthening institutional capacity and accountability reflects a common theme in the literature, which emphasises that effective anti-corruption efforts require clear roles, adequate resources, and independent oversight mechanisms (Treisman, 2000; Sundaram and Chowdhury, 2014). Improving transparency and citizen engagement aligns with theories of governance that advocate for open data initiatives and meaningful citizen participation as tools for enhancing accountability (Fox, 2015; Arnstein, 1969). The focus on addressing socio-economic and political drivers of corruption addresses fundamental issues that underlie corrupt practices, which is a perspective that is supported by broader anti-corruption research (Klitgaard, 1988; Johnston, 2005). Finally, the emphasis on implementing effective anti-corruption initiatives and monitoring progress underscores the importance of devising clear objectives, engaging in ongoing evaluation, and ensuring transparency (Harrison and Scorse, 2010; Mungiu-Pippidi, 2013).

Table 5.4: Summary of participants’ recommendations

Recommendation	Participants’ Suggestions	Literature Insights
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Strengthening institutional capacity and accountability	Define roles for anti-corruption units, increase resources, establish independent oversight committees.	Treisman (2000) and Sundaram and Chowdhury (2014): Effective institutions require clear roles, adequate resources, and independent oversight.
Improving transparency and citizen engagement	Create open data platforms, increase public forums and feedback mechanisms.	Fox (2015) and Arnstein (1969): Transparency and meaningful citizen engagement are crucial for effective governance.
Addressing socio-economic and political drivers	Implement socio-economic development programs, reduce political patronage, and pursue political reforms.	Klitgaard (1988) and Johnston (2005): Addressing economic inequality and political patronage is essential for reducing corruption.
Implementing effective anti-corruption initiatives and monitoring progress	Develop comprehensive anti-corruption strategies, establish measurable outcomes, and publish progress reports.	Harrison and Scorse (2010) and Mungiu-Pippidi (2013): Clear strategies, monitoring, and public reporting are essential for success.

5.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented and analysed the data to examine the corrosive effects of corruption on service delivery in a selected local government. It was found that corruption led to inefficiencies, inequality, and unresponsive governance. The key drivers of corruption were identified, namely poverty, inequality, political instability, as well as a lack of transparency and accountability. The chapter essentially explored the perspectives of community members and municipal workers and aligned the findings with the literature. The results highlighted the need for strengthened institutional capacity, effective anti-corruption initiatives, and community engagement to combat corruption and improve service delivery.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This study investigated the impact of corruption on service delivery in one of the KwaZulu-Natal's local municipalities. This chapter synthesises the findings and focuses on the prevalence and impact of corruption on service delivery as perceived by municipal workers and community members. The study aimed to explore four key objectives: understanding prevalent forms of corruption, identifying the drivers of corruption, assessing the direct impacts of corruption on service delivery, and evaluating community members' and municipal workers' perceptions regarding corruption. Through thematic analysis of the interview data, it became evident that corruption was a pervasive issue that significantly undermined the effectiveness of the local government under study.

The findings of this study, informed by the rational choice theory and collective action theory have several implications for addressing corruption and improving service delivery in the municipality. The insights that emerged revealed a complex interplay between personal experiences, societal attitudes, and institutional factors that collectively contributed to and sustained corrupt activities in iNdumiso Municipality. The participants were well able to articulate their understanding of various forms of corruption, including bribery, nepotism, procurement irregularities, embezzlement, and abuse of power. They also identified several drivers of corruption that they felt perpetuated these practices in the municipality. This chapter will summarise the conclusions drawn from the study and provide recommendations that may effectively address corruption in the municipality under study.

6.2 General Conclusions

The findings elicit a comprehensive understanding of corruption in the iNdumiso Municipality as they highlight its prevalence, forms, drivers, and impacts on service delivery. Each of the four main themes and the sub-themes that emerged from the data contributes to a nuanced perspective on how corruption operates within the local governance structure under investigation. The main conclusions that are presented are related to the research questions and objectives of the study.

6.2.1 Prevalence and forms of corruption

The study affirms that various forms of corruption are prevalent in the iNdumiso Municipality, particularly bribery, nepotism, procurement irregularities, embezzlement, and abuse of power. These corrupt practices significantly undermine the integrity of municipal operations and hinder effective service delivery. These findings are aligned with those of earlier researchers who aver that corruption in local government structures is often systemic and deeply entrenched, affecting not only the efficiency of public services but also the overall trust in local governments. The World Customs Organization argues that understanding the diverse manifestations of corruption is crucial for developing effective anti-corruption strategies (Polner and Ireland, 2010).

The rational choice theory posits that individuals engage in corrupt practices when the benefits of doing so outweigh the costs (Akindele, 2005). In the case of corruption, the benefits may include financial gain, power, or other forms of personal or professional advantage (Akindele, 2005). The costs, on the other hand, may include the risk of getting caught, losing one's job or reputation, or facing legal consequences (Akindele, 2005). Individuals who engage in corruption may weigh the costs and benefits and make a rational decision to engage in corrupt practices if they believe that the benefits outweigh the costs. According to Scott (2000), just like the behaviour of all animals, human behaviour is predetermined rather than free. The incentives and penalties that are experienced influence behaviour.

The fact that the participants frankly although sometimes hesitantly acknowledged these forms of corruption by municipal workers highlights the urgent need for effective intervention, particularly as the prevalence of such practices creates an environment where ethical behaviour is compromised, and this leads to a cycle of impunity and mistrust between municipal officials and the community. Addressing the corruption phenomenon in the local government structure requires a multifaceted approach that should include enhancing transparency and accountability. Implementing strict regulations and oversight mechanisms is also pivotal in mitigating corrupt practices and restoring confidence in local governance.

6.2.2 Drivers of corruption

The study identified several key drivers that contributed to corruption in the study area. Economic pressures emerged as a significant factor, with low salaries and job insecurity pushing individuals toward unethical choices to make ends meet. The research corroborated

the notion that when public servants face financial hardships, they may be susceptible to engaging in corrupt practices (Myint, 2000). Economic vulnerability thus creates a breeding ground for corruption as individuals seek alternative means to supplement their income.

In addition to economic factors, a lack of transparency and weak institutional frameworks were identified as critical drivers of corruption. The study therefore suggests that when decision-making processes are opaque and oversight mechanisms are insufficient, opportunities for corrupt behaviour increase significantly. Therefore, strengthening these frameworks is essential for reducing corruption, while holding officials accountable for their actions is imperative.

It may also be argued that cultural norms play a pivotal role in perpetuating corruption in the municipal setting, because when unethical behaviour becomes normalised and accepted as part of 'doing business', it becomes increasingly challenging to combat such practices effectively.

6.2.3 Impact of corruption on service delivery

Corruption has a direct and detrimental impact on service delivery in iNdumiso municipality. For instance, resource misallocation, project delays, and declining service quality were highlighted by the participants as significant consequences of corrupt practices. Vulnerable populations are often disproportionately affected by these issues, and they exacerbate existing inequalities within the community. The erosion of public trust in the municipal institution under study was another critical impact of corruption that was identified by this study.

When community members perceive their local government as corrupt, they are unlikely to engage with it or support its initiatives. This disengagement can lead to increased apathy towards civic responsibilities and diminish the overall effectiveness of local governance. Hence, taking measures to restore public trust is crucial for fostering an environment where citizens feel empowered to participate actively in local governance initiatives. To mitigate the impacts of corruption on service delivery, it is essential for local authorities to implement measures that enhance transparency and accountability in all their operations.

6.2.4 Perceptions of and response to corruption

The study argues that a community's perceptions of corruption will significantly influence how residents engage with local government issues. A key concern that emerged was that, while corruption was acknowledged as a serious problem, there was a tendency among community members to overlook it and accept it as part of everyday life. This normalisation of corruption

poses significant challenges for efforts to combat this scourge effectively at local government level.

Both the community and municipal participants offered several recommendations for addressing corruption in iNdumiso Municipality. They emphasised the need for enhanced transparency in decision-making processes and stronger accountability measures for public officials. The need to establish anonymous reporting mechanisms was also highlighted as an imperative to encourage whistleblowing without fear of retaliation. Additionally, the participants advocated for community engagement initiatives that would foster dialogue between municipal officials and residents and that would be effective in shifting societal and official attitudes toward integrity and accountability.

Overall, addressing the negative perceptions about the local municipality is crucial if an environment where ethical governance will thrive is the goal. By implementing the recommendations offered by the participants and drawing from the literature on anti-corruption strategies (e.g., Myint, 2000; Polner and Ireland, 2010), the local authority can work towards building a more transparent and accountable governance structure that will effectively serve the community.

6.3 Recommendations

Several recommendations are proposed to address corruption in iNdumiso Municipality:

- **Enhance transparency and communication:** Implement clear communication strategies regarding budget allocations and project decisions. Regular public reports on financial management can help build trust and ensure accountability.
- **Strengthen institutional frameworks:** Develop robust internal controls and oversight mechanisms to monitor spending and project management effectively. This could involve regular audits and in-depth evaluations of municipal projects.
- **Implement anti-corruption training programs:** Provide training for municipal workers on ethical practices, reporting mechanisms, and the importance of integrity in public service. Empowering employees with knowledge can help create a culture of accountability.

- Establish anonymous reporting mechanisms: Create safe channels for reporting corruption without fear of retaliation. Ensuring confidentiality will encourage more individuals to come forward with information about corrupt practices.
- Promote community engagement: Involve community members in decision-making processes related to local governance. Community forums can serve as platforms for discussing concerns about corruption and fostering collaboration between officials and residents.
- Address economic pressures: Review salary structures and job security measures for municipal workers to alleviate financial pressures that may lead to corrupt behaviour. Competitive wages can reduce the temptation to engage in unethical practices.
- Engage local NGOs: Collaborate with NGOs that specialise in anti-corruption efforts. These organisations can provide resources, training, and support networks for both municipal workers and community members.
- Encourage cultural change: Initiate campaigns aimed at shifting societal attitudes away from corruption towards accountability and honesty within the community. Education on the impacts of corruption can foster a collective commitment to ethical behaviour.

6.4 Policy Implications

The findings on corruption in the iNdumiso Municipality have significant implications for both local governance and community engagement. Understanding the prevalence, forms, and drivers of corruption elicited valuable insights into how these issues impact service delivery and public trust. The implications are categorised into the following key areas:

6.4.1 Impact on service delivery

Corruption directly undermines the quality and efficiency of services provided to the community. As highlighted by the participants, resource misallocation and project delays not only hinder development, but also exacerbate existing inequalities within the municipality. Moreover, vulnerable populations who rely heavily on public services to address their basic needs are disproportionately affected by corrupt practices. Addressing these issues through robust policy implementation is crucial for ensuring that all community members receive equitable access to essential services.

6.4.2 Economic consequences

Corruption has broad economic implications for the municipality. Corrupt practices can deter investment and hinder economic growth by creating an unpredictable business environment. The misallocation of funds intended for community development projects also stifles local economic opportunities and perpetuates the cycle of poverty among residents who depend on these services for their livelihoods. Effective policy implementation is therefore pivotal in promoting sustainable economic development and societal well-being within the municipality.

6.4.3 Need for systemic change

The findings highlight an urgent need for systemic change in iNdumiso Municipality to combat corruption effectively. The participants emphasised that addressing both the symptoms and root causes of corruption is essential for restoring public trust and improving service delivery. This includes enhancing transparency, strengthening institutional frameworks, and fostering a culture of accountability among municipal workers. Urgent policy review and amendments are therefore required to achieve these goals.

6.4.4 Cultural Shift

Finally, the study indicates that there is a pressing need for a cultural shift within both municipal governance and the broader community regarding perceptions of corruption. The participants pointed out that corrupt behaviours had become normalised in this local municipality, making it imperative to challenge these attitudes through education and community engagement initiatives that should be driven by dynamic and effective policy implementation.

6.5 Limitations of the Study

While this study illuminates valuable insights into the prevalence and impact of corruption in the iNdumiso Municipality, several limitations are acknowledged. First, the research relied on qualitative data gathered from interviews with municipal workers and community members which, while rich in detail, might not have fully represent the more intimate perspectives of all stakeholders. The sample size was limited, and the participants were primarily drawn from specific departments within the municipality and available community members. This limited sample may have introduced bias, while the small scope of the study limits the generalisability of the findings to other municipal contexts.

Secondly, the sensitive nature of corruption as a topic may have influenced participants' willingness to disclose their experiences and perceptions candidly. Some participants might have been hesitant to share their views due to fear of repercussions or stigma associated with discussing corrupt practices. This could have resulted in the underreporting of certain forms of corruption or a reluctance to discuss personal experiences, thereby affecting the depth and breadth of the data that were generated.

Additionally, the study focused on perceptions of corruption within a specific timeframe, which may not have captured changes in attitudes or practices over time. Corruption is a dynamic issue that can evolve based on various factors, including political changes, economic conditions, and shifts in community engagement. Future research could benefit from longitudinal studies that may track these changes over time and provide a more comprehensive understanding of corruption's impact on local governance.

Finally, while this study emphasises the need for systemic change and community engagement to combat corruption effectively, it does not delve deeply into the specific mechanisms or strategies that could be implemented to achieve this goal. Further research is needed to explore practical solutions and best practices that can be adopted by local authorities to foster transparency and accountability within municipal operations.

6.6 Conclusion

The findings of this study provide a comprehensive understanding of corruption in the iNdumiso Municipality, revealing its prevalence, forms, drivers, and impacts on service delivery. The findings highlight that corruption is not merely an isolated issue, but rather a systemic problem that significantly undermines the effectiveness of local governance. The participants articulated their experiences with various forms of corruption, such as bribery, nepotism, and embezzlement, and emphasised how these practices eroded public trust and compromised the quality of services provided to the community. More specifically, the acknowledgment of these issues by the municipal workers underscores the urgent need for systemic change to effectively combat corruption in the municipal setting under study, and possibly in other similar settings where the same problems are experienced.

Moreover, the study identified the key drivers of corruption as economic pressures, lack of transparency, weak institutional frameworks, and cultural norms that normalise unethical behaviour. These factors create an environment where corrupt practices will continue to thrive

if they remain unchecked. The implications of these findings extend beyond identifying the issues; in fact, they call for comprehensive strategies involving local government officials, community members, and civil organisations to foster a transparent and accountable governance framework in iNdumiso Municipality. By addressing both the symptoms and root causes of corruption, this local authority, and others that may face a similar dilemma, can work towards restoring public trust and ensuring equitable access to services for all residents.

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APPENDIX A: CONSENT FORM



Date: 01 SEPTEMBER 2024

To Whom It May Concern

My name is Siphesihle Mdlalose, and I am from eMondlo. I am currently pursuing my master's degree in criminology and forensic studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College Campus.

Phone No. [REDACTED]

e-mail: [REDACTED]

Supervisor: Dr Londeka Ngubane

Email: NgubaneLP@ukzn.ac.za

Phone No: 0 [REDACTED]

You are being invited to consider participating in a study that seeks to investigate the impacts of corruption on service delivery in your municipality. I would like that you share your experiences with me being guided by the prepared questions which are based on your experience as an employee/community member at your municipality. The study is expected to enrol 18 participants which 10 is municipal officials and 8 community members. The duration of your participation if you choose to enrol and remain in the study is expected to be 2 weeks.

Participating in this study may involve mild discomfort or frustration when discussing personal experiences with corruption or poor service delivery. You individuals may feel uneasy sharing their perceptions or experiences, potentially leading to emotional distress. Furthermore, there is a small risk of reputational damage or backlash for individuals or organizations that share negative experiences or perceptions of corruption. To mitigate this risk, all data will be anonymized, and confidentiality will be maintained.

While there are no direct benefits to participants, their contributions will significantly inform strategies to improve service delivery and reduce corruption in

the specific sector or industry under investigation. The scientific benefits of this study lie in its potential to contribute to the understanding of the impact of corruption on service delivery, ultimately informing policy and practice to improve governance and public services.

This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (_____).

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact the researcher at (provide contact details) or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

**HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS
ADMINISTRATION**

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001 Durban 4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609 Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Before you agree to this, I would like to inform you about the following things regarding your participation in this research.

1. Your participation in this research is voluntary.
2. You may choose to withdraw at any time without any negative consequences.
3. I would like to tape-record the session for research purposes ONLY.
4. Your participation will be anonymous (any writing, presentation and publication from this work will respect your anonymity).
5. What you tell me will be treated with respect and confidentiality. Only Dr Ngubane and I will have access to this (raw) material.
6. Only if you understand and agree to the above points, can you sign and then take part in this study.

Participant's informed consent

I have been informed about the study entitled investigating the impact of corruption on service delivery by Siphesihle .

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study.

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher at ()

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS
ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001 Durban 4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609 Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Additional consent, where applicable

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview / focus group discussion YES / NO

Signature of Participant Date

Signature of Witness Date

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Study topic: Investigating the impact of corruption on service delivery: a case study of KwaZulu Natal municipality

Questions Municipality officials

1. In your municipality, who is responsible for the service delivery process?
2. How is the service delivery process carried out?
3. How are the personnels that lead projects appointed in your municipality?
4. Who monitors their progress and ensures that they are following protocol while making sure services are delivered efficiently?
5. In your understanding ng what is corruption
6. In our view, how has corruption affected the delivery of services in the iNdumiso municipality?
7. What form of corruption is more prominent in the Indumiso municipality?
8. What impact does that form of corruption have on service delivery to the community?
9. In the event that funds intended for a service delivery project have been misappropriated, what measures are taken to ensure its completion?
10. How are the service delivery funds reimbursed if they have been mismanaged?
11. What solution can you suggest to be a possible solution in combating corruption that hinders service delivery?
12. Are there any measures to combat corruption that have been put in place in your municipality?
13. What tools are set in place to measure the success of projects in communities under the Indumiso municipality?

Questions for the community members of Indumiso municipality

1. How long have you lived in this municipality
2. How would you define corruption in the context of municipal service delivery
3. Are you aware of any instance of corruption in your municipality if yes please elaborate

- 4 in your opinion how has corruption affected the quality of municipal service delivery
- 5 can you provide specific examples where corruption has led to poor service delivery
- 6 has your trust in municipal officials changed over time if so how and why
- 7 do you think there are adequate measures in place to hold corrupt officials accountable why or why not
- 8 do you feel that community impact is considered in the municipal planning and delivery
- 9 are you aware of any channels available for reporting corruption in the municipality
- 10 what measures do you think could be implemented to reduce corruption

APPENDIX B IN ISIZULU

Isihloko: Ukuphenya umthelela wokungathembeki ekulethweni kwezinsiza: ucwaningo lwecala loMkhandlu waKwaZulu-Natali

Uhlu Lwemibuzo Yabasebenzi bakwaMaspala

1. Emkhandlwini wenu, ubani onesibopho senqubo yokuhlinzekwa kwezinsiza?
2. Inqubo yokuhlinzekwa kwezinsiza iqhutshwa kanjani?
3. Abantu abahola amaphrojekthi emkhandlwini wenu bakhethwa kanjani?
4. Ubani oqapha inqubekelaphambili yabo futhi aqinisekise ukuthi bayalandela imithetho kuyilapho eqinisekisa ukuthi izinsiza zihlinzekwa ngempumelelo?
5. Ngokokuqonda kwakho, kuyini ukungathembeki (corruption)?
6. Ngokubona kwakho, ukungathembeki kube namuphi umthelela ekulethweni kwezinsiza kumkhandlu we-eThekwini?
7. Hlobo luni lokungathembeki oluvame kakhulu kumkhandlu iNdumiso?
8. Hlobo lokungathembeki luba namuphi umthelela ekulethweni kwezinsiza emphakathini?
9. Uma izimali ebezihloselwe iphrojekthi yokuhlinzekwa kwezinsiza zingaphathwanga ngendlela efanele, yiziphi izinyathelo ezithathwayo ukuqinisekisa ukuqedwa kwayo?
10. Izimali ezisetshenziswe ngendlela engalungile zibuyiselwa kanjani ukuze iphrojekthi yokuhlinzekwa kwezinsiza iqhutshwe?
11. Yisiphi isixazululo ongasisikisela sokulwa nokungathembeki okuphazamisa ukuhlinzekwa kwezinsiza?
12. Ngabe zikhona izinyathelo ezibekiwe zokulwa nokungathembeki emkhandlwini wenu?
13. Yiziphi izinsiza ezibekiwe zokulinganisa impumelelo yamaphrojekthi emphakathini ngaphansi kukamkhandlu iNdumiso?

Uhlu lwemibuzo yomphakathi

Usuphila isikhathi esingakanani kule miphakathi?

Ungayichaza kanjani inkohlakalo emkhakheni wokulethwa kwezinsizakalo zomphakathi?

Uyalwazi yini uhlelo lokukhwabanisa kule miphakathi? Uma kunjalo, ngicela uchaze kabanzi. Ngokwembono yakho, inkohlakalo ibithinte kanjani izinga lokulethwa kwezinsizakalo zomphakathi?

Unganika izibonelo ezithile lapho inkohlakalo iholele khona ekuthuthukisweni kwezinsizakalo eziphansi?

Uthando lwakho kumasekeli omphakathi lushintshe yini ngokuhamba kwesikhathi? Uma kunjalo, kanjani futhi kungani?

Ucabanga ukuthi kukhona izinyathelo ezanele zokubeka abaphatha abakhwabanisayo phambi komthetho? Kungani noma kungani cha?

Uzwa ukuthi umphakathi usetshenziswa kanjani ekwakhiweni nasekulethweni kwemisebenzi yomphakathi?

Uyalwazi yini amagatsha atholakalayo okukhuluma ngekhwabaniso kule miphakathi?

Yiziphi izinyathelo ocabanga ukuthi zingathathwa ukuze kuncishiswe inkohlakalo?

APPENDIX C: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



28 January 2025

Siphehile Hazel Mdlalose (219067455)
School of Applied Human Sc
Howard College Campus

Dear SH Mdlalose,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00008040/2024

Project title: Investigating the impact of corruption on service delivery: a case study of a KwaZulu-Natal municipality
Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 04 December 2024 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

Incidents of adverse events and serious adverse events (AEs and SAEs) should be reported in writing to HSSREC, the study sponsors, and any regulatory authority (where appropriate), within 7 working days of the occurrence for local sites and 14 days for all other South African sites.

This approval is valid until 28 January 2026.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Health Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,




Professor Dipane Hialele (Chair)
/nng

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa

Telephone: +27 1031 250 8350/4557/3587 Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research/Ethics>

Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Wahlville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

APPENDIX D: GATE KEEPER'S APPLICATION LETTER



Subject: Request to Use Municipality as Research Site for Academic Purposes

13 June 2024



Dear Municipal Manager,

I hope this letter finds you well. My name is Siphesihle Mdlalose, and I am from eMondlo B1762. I am currently pursuing my Master's degree in Criminology and Forensic Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College Campus. I am writing to request permission to use the municipality as a research site for my academic project.

The focus of my research is to investigate the impact of corruption on service delivery within the municipality. I am particularly interested in understanding how corrupt practices may affect the efficiency and effectiveness of public services provided to residents. It is important to note that my research is intended solely for academic purposes and is not aimed at any journalistic or non-academic investigation. I am not investigating corruption itself but rather its impact on service delivery. Therefore, I will not need any sensitive documents. I will need eight participants to ask a few questions regarding the operations of service delivery.

I believe that studying the relationship between corruption and service delivery within the municipality will provide valuable insights for both academia and local governance. By gaining access to the municipality and its operations, I aim to gather data and conduct analyses that will contribute to the body of knowledge in criminology and public administration.

I assure you that all information obtained during the research process will be handled with the utmost confidentiality and will be used exclusively for scholarly purposes. I am committed to maintaining ethical standards throughout my research and will adhere to any guidelines or protocols set forth by the municipality during my study.

I kindly request your consideration and approval to use the municipality as a research site for my academic project. Your cooperation and support in this matter would be greatly appreciated. I am more than willing to discuss any details or requirements you may have regarding the research process.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my request. I look forward to the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the field of Criminology through this research project.

Warm Regards,
Siphesihle Mdlalose
Master's Student in Criminology



Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

APPENDIX E :GATE KEEPER'S LETTER

Our Ref: 4/M/1
Your Ref:



18 June 2024

Ms Siphesihle Mdialose
UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
Durban
4000

Dear Sir/ Madam

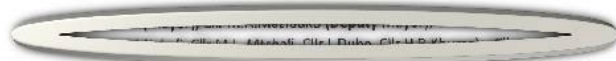
SUBJECT: RE - REQUEST TO USE MUNICIPALITY AS RESEARCH SITE FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES

I hope this letter finds you well.

This letter serves to inform you that you have been granted permission to use the municipality as the research site for your academic project.

It is therefore important to confine your research to academic purposes and must not be used to discredit the Municipality or be for political gains.

Yours Faithfully,



APPENDIX F: GATEKEEPER'S LETTER

To Whom It May Concern:

RE: REQUEST TO CONDUCT THE STUDY TITLED: INVESTIGATING THE IMPACT OF CORRUPTION ON SERVICE DELIVERY (A CASE STUDY OF A KwaZulu Natal Municipality).

This letter serves to confirm that Sipha Mhlangeni, Student No. 219387455 is a student from UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU NATAL (UKZN), who would like to conduct a one-on-one interview with you people on the above-mentioned case study.

As The Municipal Ward Councilor hereby state that I do not have a Problem with that. I grant her permission to do the above mentioned research.

Yours Faithfully
Signature [Redacted]
Name and Surname Z. M. Ngcobo

ASACELUSI MUNICIPALITY
CL. R. Z. M. NGCOBO
WARD 18
CONTACT 078 647 8173

APPENDIX G:EDITOR'S DECLARATION

3 Entombeni Drive
63 Walnut Grove
Amanzimtoti
4215

DECLARATION OF EDITING AND PROOF-READING

TO:
The University of KwaZulu Natal
Research Ethics Committee
Private Bag X54001
Durban
4000

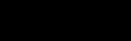
Sir/Madam

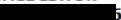
I, Nicolina D. Coertze, declare that I meticulously perused the academic manuscript referred to below for language editing and proof-reading purposes. I identified and corrected linguistic and stylistic inaccuracies to the best of my knowledge and ability. Using the *Word Tracking* system, I kept track of the changes that I made. I also offered additional annotations for consideration by the author should she deem it necessary to address areas that I considered might need attention. I declare that I adhered to the general principles that guide the work of a language editor and that I remained within my brief as had been agreed with the author of the manuscript.

Details

TITLE:	The impact of corruption on service delivery: A case study of a Kwazulu-Natal municipality
NAME OF CANDIDATE:	Siphehile Mdlalose
STUDENT NUMBER	219067455
SUPERVISOR:	Dr Londeka Princess Ngubane
PROPOSED QUALIFICATION	Master of Social Science
DEPARTMENT	School of Applied Human Sciences
TERTIARY INSTITUTION	UKZN

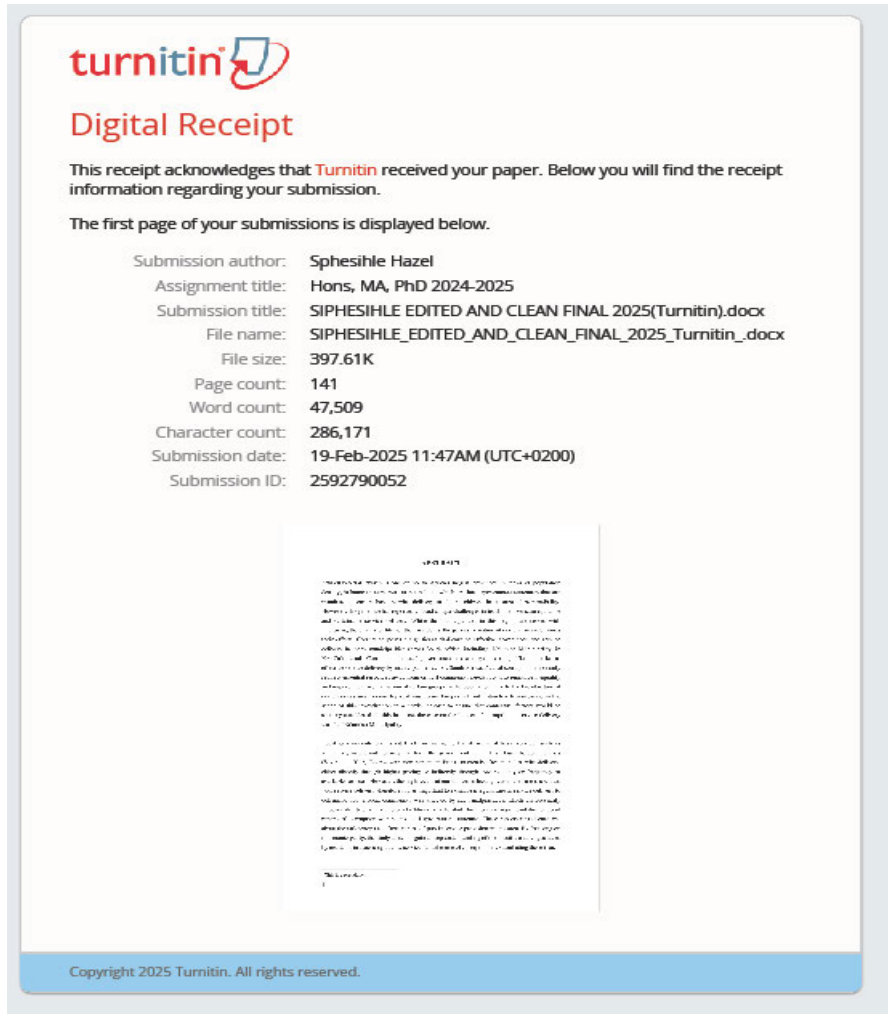
Yours sincerely



(MRS) N.D. COERTZE
LANGUAGE EDITOR
Cell: 

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APPENDIX H: TURNITIN RECEIPT



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