Exploring perceptions of service delivery in Umzumbe Local Municipality, South Africa

by

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Dedication

I dedicated this dissertation to Jehovah God for seeing me through this journey. An aspect of the project is also dedicated to my family for standing with me in difficult times.

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"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Philippians 4: 13). I thank God for the knowledge and strength to accomplish this journey. Although the journey was tough, I am blessed to have completed it through His divine grace.

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Abstract

Post-1994, the current South African government shifted its efforts and policies toward development to address the country's economic and social needs, such as job creation, poverty eradication and promotion of equality. Despite the several reforms initiated by the government, poor service delivery remains a critical challenge facing South Africa, leading to several protests. Therefore, this research explored the perceptions towards poor service delivery in South African local governments to identify possible solutions. The study adopted interpretivism as the research philosophy to explore the participants' perceptions towards service delivery in Umzumbe Local Municipality, located within the Ugu District Municipality in the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa. A qualitative research method was used to gain an adequate understanding of the participant's perceptions towards service delivery. The study involved fourteen participants (ward committee chairpersons and officials) from Umzumbe Local Municipality. The data was collected through focus group discussions. The collected data was transcribed and analysed using NVivo (Version 14). Thematic analysis was conducted to identify, organise and report both the main themes and sub-themes identified from the dataset. The findings revealed that the stakeholders' (ward councillors, ward committee and municipal managers) roles in service delivery included ensuring accountability, managing resources, monitoring and evaluating municipal and service providers' performance, meeting quality standards, supplying raw materials and observing service delivery protests. Also, the findings revealed that the community expected the municipality to provide accessible, affordable, sustainable, and quality services. Furthermore, the study identified the challenges that hampered service delivery in the municipality, including funding, capacity/staff shortages, lack of accountability, corruption, political deployment and political coalitions. Based on the findings, recommendations were proposed to increase the quality of service delivery in the municipality, including the appointment of competent staff, the introduction of a good customer-care system, close monitoring of municipal service delivery and performance, encouraging of teamwork, renewal of political will to fight corruption, employee training, effective communication, and avoidance of political interference. Overall, the findings provided in-depth knowledge of the stakeholders' (i.e., ward councillors, ward committees and municipal senior managers) perceptions toward service delivery in the Umzumbe Local Municipality.

Keywords: Accessibility, accountability, affordability, service delivery, service delivery protests, service tangibility, Umzumbe Local Municipality

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

AG	Auditor General
ANC	African National Congress
DPSA	Department of Public Service and Administration
EDP	Expectancy-Disconfirmation Paradigm
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
IPM	Importance-Performance Model
IWRM	Integrated Water Resource Management
LED	Local Economic Development
MFMA	Municipal Financial Management Act
MSA	Municipal Structures Act
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SASAS	South African Social Attitudes Survey
StatsSA	Statistics South Africa
VPT	Value-Precept Theory

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Chapter One: Introduction and Background of the Study

1.1 Introduction

Post-1994, the current South African government has shifted its efforts and policies toward development to address the country's economic and social needs such as job creation, poverty alleviation, and promotion of equality (Breakfast, Bradshaw & Nomarwayi, 2019). Despite the several reforms initiated by the government, South Africa's challenges, including its high unemployment rate, poverty, inequality and poor service delivery are far from over. Among these challenges, poor service delivery remains the most critical, leading to several protests. For instance, evidence suggests that protests are frequently linked to deficient service delivery (Mamokhere, 2021). In a similar study, Mamokhere (2019) likewise shares a view that service delivery remains the most pressing challenge, especially in developing nations, including South Africa.

The extant literature reveals that although there is abundant scholarly research on service delivery (Brown, 2017; Kgatle, 2018; Mamokhere, 2020; Netshidzivhani, Musitha & Musitha, 2021) and government interventions, service delivery, particularly in South Africa, continues to deteriorate. Therefore, this present research aimed to investigate the perceptions regarding poor service delivery within the South African municipalities in order to identify possible solutions. The chapter describes the research background and gaps in existing research. The research objectives and questions that form part of the study are also provided in the chapter. Furthermore, the significance of the study, research methodology and structure of the research project are included in the chapter.

1.2 Background of the Study

There is a surge in community protests worldwide due to poor service delivery (Netshidzivhani et al., 2021). Similarly, Mamokhere (2021) confirms that service delivery protests are a global issue facing many countries, especially for developing countries. According to Mamokhere (2021), several countries, including South have witnessed violent or non-violent protests, as a result of service delivery backlogs. For instance, Mamokhere (2021) claims that in 2012, Asian countries, such as Yemen, experienced massive protests coupled with road blockages by citizens because of poor service delivery and increased fuel prices. Mangai (2016) suggests that public service

delivery has been deteriorating for several decades in African countries, including Ghana and Nigeria.

The above-mentioned situation has also prevailed in South Africa since the Apartheid era. According to Zhu (2015), public involvement in community politics and social affairs tend to result in sustainable community development, thereby improving services that represent the needs and aspirations of the citizens. In South Africa, public participation involves practices such as public meetings, gatherings, community forums, road shows, and street-and-house walkabouts (Molefe & Manamela, 2021). However, the question is whether these practices have translated into improved service delivery, especially in less developed communities. Tsheola (2012) advocates that in a situation in which public participation has been properly executed, there is less likelihood of community protest action. In South Africa, it must be acknowledged that protest action is a constitutional right, as contained in the country's Constitution Act 108 of 1996. Hanna, Vanclay, Langdon and Arts (2016) also affirm that in democratic nations, including South Africa, protest action is an effective tool for citizens to draw the government's attention and action to issues facing them.

Notwithstanding this constitutional right, protest action is considered a common phenomenon, given the numerous service delivery protests since the Apartheid era. For example, Mamokhere (2020) and Morudu (2017) argue that after the 1994 elections, South Africa continued to experience several protests attributed to poor service delivery. It has been acknowledged that most of these protests are violence-free (Mamokhere, 2020), involving only peaceful marches to present a petition (Dassah, 2012). By contrast, evidence suggests that most protests have been characterised by violence, "whereby protesters participate in physical acts that either cause instant harm to persons or damaging physical state properties" (Mamokhere, 2019, p.2).

The view expressed by Mamokhere (2019, 2020) is consistent with the assertion made by Brown (2017), who stated that protests are recurring issues in democratised South Africa. These current findings are also supported by the similar views expressed by early writers such as Cobbett and Cohen (1988) and Musitha (2016) that service delivery protests were a political tool and strategy to end Apartheid-created structures of local government. Khambule, Nomdo and Siswana (2019) agree with other scholars such as Brown (2017) and Mamokhere (2019) that in recent times, South Africa has come under the spotlight because of destructive service delivery protests. According to

Martins (2021), between August 2020 and January 2021, the South African Police Service recorded about 909 protests. During the periods mentioned above, about 657 protesters were arrested for different offenses, including unlawful barricading of roads amidst the service delivery protests. Mokhomole, Khosa and Olutola (2023) contend that despite the arrest and prosecution of protest criminals, South Africa still experiences violent service delivery protests.

Khambule, Nomdo and Siswana (2019) find that the numerous protests are attributed to factors such as limited services, corruption and failure by municipalities to address communities' needs. StatsSA (2020) reports that high unemployment rate, poverty and inadequate infrastructure add to the growing dissatisfaction in South Africa. Day, Cornell and Malherbe (2021) acknowledge that the causes of protest action in South Africa include unemployment, crime, domestic violence, and the quality of democracy in post-Apartheid society. In their study, Molefe and Manamela (2021) observe that 35% of protests in South Africa took place in Gauteng in informal settlements and townships such as Diepsloot, Thokoza, Sebokeng, Bekkersdal, Bronkhorstspruit and Alexandra. However, 15% of protests occurred in the Eastern Cape, while 13% occurred in KwaZulu-Natal. Evidence shows that most violent protests resulted in damage to state properties, injuries and mortality (Mamokhere, 2023; Msenge & Nzewi, 2021).

Mamokhere (2020) believes that the frequent service delivery protests are an indication to local governments to identify the root cause of the protests and find sustainable solutions to them. According to Mamokhere (2020), the burning issues behind most service delivery protests include poor and insufficient service delivery. Netshidzivhani et al. (2021) also concur that limited service delivery, unemployment, unethical conduct, broken promises, lack of public engagement and trust have contributed to many service-related protests in local municipalities.

In the quest to address poor service delivery, Netshidzivhani et al. (2021) recommend that municipalities allocate sufficient budget for service delivery. Netshidzivhani et al. (2021) add that municipalities, especially Greater Tzaneen Local Municipality, should be proactive and responsive to addressing community grievances about service delivery. Similarly, Manamela (2021) maintains that local governments enforce and adhere to legal frameworks of service delivery. Therefore, this current research aims to explore the perceptions toward service delivery in local governments – that of Umzumbe Local Municipality, where this study is located. The municipality is located within the Ugu District Municipality, KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa. The

municipality includes 17 traditional authority areas comprising 19 municipal wards. The Umzumbe Local Municipality Council comprises of 19 Ward Councillors and 18 Proportional Representation Councillors. Zondi and Qwabe (2022) underline that quality education in Umzumbe Local Municipality is affected by poor service delivery, poor infrastructure, poor institutional capacity, and a lack of revenue generation. In the last few years, there has been concern, especially from the Inkatha Freedom Party (IPF) about the on-going disruptions that have been taking place at Umzumbe Local Municipality due to service delivery protests. Zondi and Qwabe (2022) point out that the inadequacies in social and economic infrastructure at Umzumbe Local Municipality have negatively impacted the quality of basic services, particularly in health, education, and recreation. The authors further argued that due to the nature of the difficult geography and dispersed settlement of rural communities located in the Umzumbe Local Municipality, energy connections are costly, leading to illegal electricity connections. Zondi and Qwabe (2022) conclude that 25 years after the demise of the apartheid regime, there is still much to be achieved in pursuit of rural infrastructure development that impacts service delivery, including energy, road networks, library facilities, public transport and telecommunication systems. Given the above, this study investigates service delivery challenges in Umzumbe Local Municipality by exploring the stakeholders' (i.e., ward committees, ward councillors and municipal senior officials) perceptions toward service delivery in an attempt to address service delivery gaps and protests in local governments.

1.3 Problem Statement

It is undeniable that South Africans have protested and continue to protest against the Apartheid policies before and post-1994 for equal distribution of national resources. Morudu (2017) believes that post-1994, South African municipalities still witness several service delivery protests. South African local governments are mandated to ensure quality and continuous service delivery to their constituents or communities (Constitution of South Africa, 1996; Ndevu & Muller, 2018). However, it seems that some of them are still ignoring this constitutional right. For instance, municipalities such as Greater Tzaneen Local Municipality, eThekwini Municipality, Most people (60%) living in the Umzumbe Local Municipality have a low income, reflecting a situation of acute impoverishment. Umzumbe Local Municipality and many more have come under the spotlight for poor governance, leading to poor service delivery and protests (Mamokhere et al., 2021; Molefe & Manamela, 2021).

Khambule et al. (2019) claim that although several studies have explored the reasons for service delivery protests, limited empirical research investigates stakeholders' perceptions toward service delivery protests in the Umzumbe Local Municipality specifically. Hence, this study is needed to address this research gap concerning the stakeholders' (i.e., ward committees, ward councillors and municipal senior officials) perceptions toward service delivery in Umzumbe Local Municipality.

1.4 Aim of the Study

The study aimed to explore and understand the stakeholders' perceptions of service delivery in Umzumbe Local Municipality.

1.5 Research Objectives

The research objectives guiding the study were:

i. To identify the key stakeholders responsible for ensuring service delivery in Umzumbe Local Municipality
ii. To investigate the nature of services expected by the communities in the Umzumbe Local Municipality
iii. To understand the service delivery challenges facing Umzumbe Local Municipality
iv. To make recommendations to the Umzumbe Local Municipality on how to ensure effective service delivery.

1.6 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

i. Who are the key stakeholders responsible for ensuring service delivery in Umzumbe Local Municipality?
ii. What is the nature of services expected from the communities in the Umzumbe Local Municipality?
iii. What are the service delivery challenges facing Umzumbe Local Municipality?
iv. What recommendations can be made to Umzumbe Local Municipality to ensure effective service delivery?

1.7 Rationale of the Study

Protest actions have been common features in South Africa both before and after the democratic election post-1994 (Mamokhere et al., 2021; Mashamaite, 2014). Given this phenomenon, the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) Africa (2021) warns that community protests will remain a permanent feature of South Africa. Hence, the research is necessary for enhancing service delivery by minimising protests in municipalities, specifically that of Umzumbe Local Municipality.

1.8 Significance of the Study

The findings contribute to the global knowledge on service delivery and protests and will thus be a point of reference for learners, researchers, academics, practitioners, municipalities and government. Furthermore, it has extended the knowledge in fields such as public governance and administration, leadership and community development. Thirdly, the study serves as an important mechanism for stakeholders such as municipalities and local governments to understand and thus address poor service delivery and related protests. It also helps shape the policy-making process regarding service delivery by local governments. The study provides a better knowledge of the barriers to service delivery and protests in municipalities. In addition, it has expanded the knowledge on strategies that the municipalities can adopt to mitigate poor service delivery and protests; hence, it acts as a guide for policymakers in local governments. Finally, the research findings can help improve the standard of living, particularly in areas where service delivery has deteriorated, as this research aimed to identify strategies to help address service delivery challenges and protests.

1.9 Research Methods

An interpretivist paradigm was used to explore various opinions and views towards service delivery in local governments. The study used a qualitative research method to understand the participants' perceptions of service delivery. The data collection tool used was focus group discussions. The participants in this study included ward committee chairpersons, ward councillors and senior municipal officials. NVivo (Version 14) was used to analyse the data. Thematic analysis was conducted to analyse and organise the patterns identified in the dataset. Informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality are the ethical considerations in this study. A Gatekeeper's letter was obtained from Umzumbe Local Municipality to allow access to the study site. A consent form was distributed and collected from all participants. The form contained information such as

description of the procedures, methods of investigation and risks, if any. To maintain confidentiality and anonymity, participants' identities and personal information, such as their names, were replaced by codes. Furthermore, the data emanating from this study has been stored in a safe place and will be discarded after five years.

1.10 Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

The first delimitation of the study was the choice of the problem itself, which included an exploration of the perceptions of service delivery in Umzumbe Local Municipality that have been examined from an individual and organisational standpoint. This delimitation emerged primarily from existing literature and the reality of service delivery protests in the municipality. The study focused on specific constructs because of limited studies that assess stakeholders' perceptions toward service delivery in this particular municipality. Based on the definitions of service delivery and the role of stakeholders in service delivery, the study included committee chairpersons, ward councillors and senior municipal officials in the Umzumbe Local Municipality.

Previous studies on service delivery have mainly been quantitative. Therefore, this study adopted a qualitative design to provide an in-depth understanding of the participant's perceptions of service delivery. The results of this study are not generalisable to municipalities other than the one on which the data was collected, hence, the results may vary if the study was repeated in a different municipality. This is because the municipality chosen for the case study comprises employees with varied interests and perceptions. The participants in this study included committee chairpersons, ward councillors and senior municipal officials in the Umzumbe Local Municipality. Therefore, the results cannot be transferred to other groups of individuals.

Another limitation of the study was the difficulty in getting the research participants to participate in this study. As mentioned earlier, the study included committee chairpersons, ward councillors, and senior municipal officials in the Umzumbe Local Municipality. These participants occupy strategic positions; hence, they often have busy schedules. This limitation affected the collection of data as envisaged by the researcher. Also, the COVID-19 pandemic encountered in 2020 and thereafter was a major challenge for this study. During the pandemic, it was difficult for the investigator to have physical contact with the participants due to social distancing prescriptions instituted by the South African government. This impacted negatively on the completion of the research project and studies.

1.11 Structure of the dissertation

The research project includes five chapters. The chapter includes the research background and description of the problem statement. Moreover, it includes the research aims, objectives, and questions. It also includes the contribution of the research, research methodology and ethical considerations. Lastly, it describes the structure of the research project.

Chapter Two reviews the empirical and theoretical literature concerning service delivery and protests. The chapter includes the historical background and antecedents of service delivery, legislation regulating service delivery and protests in South Africa and worldwide, the challenges, effects and strategies to address poor service delivery and related protests. The chapter further describes the theory and conceptual model that underpins the study.

Chapter Three explains the research methods utilised in investigating the subject matter. The chapter includes information on the research paradigm, design, methods, target population, study location, sampling strategy, sample size, instrument for data collection, assurance and data analysis.

Chapter Four deals with the research findings and discussion. The study employed a process of thematic analysis to assist in analysing, sorting and reporting the themes identified in the study.

Chapter Five deals with the conclusion, and recommendations of the study.

1.12 Chapter Summary

The chapter contained information about the study, which relates to service delivery in the Umzumbe Local Municipality. It described the factors responsible for poor service delivery and protests in South Africa. It outlined the gaps in existing research on the perceptions towards public service delivery in municipalities. Also, it contained the aims, questions, and objectives that support the investigation. Furthermore, it highlighted the significance of the study. Besides, it discussed the research methods used to address the questions and objectives. Furthermore, it described the ethical considerations that form part of the investigation.

The chapter below reviews the existing literature and theory related to the research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the existing literature related to the issues of service delivery at government level. The first part of this chapter defines key terms that underpin the study. The next section describes the laws that regulate service delivery. Moreover, the chapter reviews literature on the historical development and nature of service delivery, dimensions, antecedents, stakeholders' roles, and the causes and consequences of service delivery failures. The last part of the chapter discusses existing strategies aimed at improving service delivery.

2.2 Description of the Key Terms

It is important to describe the terms that set the foundation of the study so as to provide readers with adequate knowledge and understanding of the study. The term "perception" is a primary component of several theoretical frameworks primarily used in nursing research. McDonald (2011) points out that perception reflects one's understanding of the world. Qiong (2017) argues that in philosophy, psychology, and cognitive science, perception involves understanding sensory information. Perception has further been defined as the process whereby people express their thoughts and feelings to make meaning of the environment (Momeni, Sargeran, Yazdani & Sighaldeh, 2022). However, in this study, the term perception will be considered the process whereby individuals interpret and understand their environment.

Lehtinen and Järvinen (2015) contend that there exist several definitions on what constitutes a service. Lehtinen and Järvinen (2015) went on to suggest that these definitions are more or less problematic. One of the pioneers or authorities of service, Lehtinen (1984) describes service in four ways: abstract nature (intangibility), process nature, inseparability and interactive nature. Ahonen (2007) and Nordma (2004) confirm that, generally, services are considered intangible by nature. According to Poor, Poor and Darkhaneh (2013, p.34), "service consists of a set of activities more or less intangible."

On the other hand, Ledimo and Martins (2015) refer to service delivery as the process of making services and products available to clients. According to Reddy (2016), service delivery involves making goods and benefits available to the public to improve quality of life. Seyitoğlu and Ivanov (2020) comment that service delivery is the way in which a company delivers its value proposition

to its target customers. The study lies on the definition by Reddy (2016) because it fits perfectly into the study.

2.3 Legal Frameworks that Regulate Service Delivery in South Africa

In South Africa, it is stated that the primary responsibilities of local government are to identify development outcomes and find various solutions to assist municipalities to develop (Ndevu & Muller, 2017). This milestone suggests how important local government is regarding service delivery. The legal frameworks governing service delivery describe the approaches employed by municipalities or local governments to address challenges hampering service delivery. The laws that support service delivery are discussed below.

2.3.1 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996

The Constitution was promulgated to heal and address the challenges created by the previous Apartheid laws. The Constitution promotes a democratic society that relates to values, respect for human dignity, rights and social justice, such that all the people of the Republic are equal before the law (Muthwa, 2015). The Constitution requires the elected government and municipalities to address the will of the people, which is the foundation of a democratic state. According to Muthwa (2015), the developmental challenges facing South Africa must be addressed by aligning with provisions of the constitutional mandate on service delivery. Chapter 10 of the Constitution has precise directives about public administration. It guides the behaviour of all personnel within the service delivery space toward the broader society.

Section 24(2) empowers municipalities to respect and ensure the implementation of common rights. Furthermore, the Constitution requires the government to adopt and implement mechanisms to promote the rights and well-being of all persons living in South Africa (Fuo, 2015). Likewise, Govender and Reddy (2015) and Mashamaite and Lethoko (2018) concur that the Constitution sets the pace for service delivery. Also, Ndevu and Muller (2018) contend that the Constitution mandates local governments to organise their administration to enhance basic services in their local areas.

2.3.2 White Paper on Local Government of 1998

This legislative instrument perceives local government as an entity committed to working with society to identify mechanisms to mitigate their socio-economic challenges and improve living standards (RSA, 1998:23). The white paper provides an adequate explanation of four

characteristics of local governments. The first characteristic is to improve socio-economic development and growth. The second characteristic is to integrate and coordinate developmental goals. The third characteristic is to ensure democratic development, to empower people and to redistribute scarce resources. The fourth characteristic is to provide quality leadership and a conducive learning environment. The White Paper sets the foundation for the local government laws that deal with service delivery issues (Govender & Reddy, 2015). According to Munzhedzi (2021), the White Paper was promulgated to transform the public service to become more efficient to deliver its mandate. It aims to provide frameworks of policies to facilitate and improve public service delivery (Munzhedzi, 2021).

2.3.3 Municipal Structures Act of 1998

This Act requires municipal officials, especially councillors, to adopt appropriate measures to consult and engage the local community and civic organisations in local governance. In line with the above, "Section 19(2) (c) of this Act encourages local governments to create a culture of governance that promotes democracy through public engagement" (RSA, 1998, p.14). The Act encourages municipalities to make services more affordable and to engage the local communities in municipal affairs (Govender & Reddy, 2015). Chapter 4 promotes coordination and community participation in developing tangible plans to improve the lives of the citizens (Mashamaite & Lethoko, 2018). This aligns with Chapter 5, in which community needs are documented, and the product becomes the service-delivery framework described as integrated development planning.

2.3.4 White paper on the transformation of the public service

Fernandez and Lee (2016) pronounce that this legislative instrument was introduced in 1995 to cause a radical transformation in public enterprises, making it more effective, efficient, responsible as well as responsive to the citizens' needs. The white paper addresses issues including efficient service delivery. The white paper reflects Section 195 of the Constitution, which requires public officials to act honestly in their dealings with the public and with clients (Jarbandhan, 2022).

2.3.5 White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery of 1997

This white paper aims to build an effective public service to meet the challenges of improving services in local governments (Jarbandhan, 2022). It aims to treat the people as customers and to transform public entities or organisations into becoming responsive to their needs. This legal framework requires public officials to strive toward professional ethics when performing their

responsibilities (DPSA, 2022). The White Paper thus is important in improving service delivery in local governments.

2.3.6 Municipal Financial Management Act 56 of 2003

The Municipal Financial Management Act (MFMA) 56 of 2003 remains one of the important legal frameworks that contribute to service delivery by enforcing accountability. For instance, Section 71(1) of the Act promotes accountability by holding the government and civil servants accountable for their stewardship. Masuku and Jili (2019) claim that municipal managers are expected to inspire employees by being accountable and responsive to the oversight role, which leads to service delivery. The municipal managers and officials are required to account not only to their superiors but also to the public. They must report on how they manage the municipal resources and how they have been responsive to the public on whether they have achieved their intended objectives (Zwane & Matsiliza, 2022).

2.4 The Current State of Service Delivery in South African Local Government

As already discussed, the Constitution mandates municipalities to promote and protect human dignity, equality and freedom (Reddy, 2016). Therefore, local governments are mandated to ensure that municipal services meet the citizens' needs. The provincial government aims to provide sustainable and effective municipal services. From the legal perspective, local governments are required to conform to certain fundamental principles such as accountability, transparency, efficiency, and value for money regarding the services they deliver (Reddy, 2016).

Despite massive government investment, service delivery has declined post-1994 (Zondi, Nzimakwe & Mbili, 2017). For instance, Reddy (2016) points out that basic services have sometimes proved unreliable, greatly inconveniencing, and endangering local communities. However, in recent years, local governments have been heavily criticised for abysmal performance, especially regarding service delivery (Kalonda & Govender, 2021). The criticisms have led to numerous service delivery protests, sometimes resulting in violence and destruction of state properties.

Zerihun and Mashigo (2022) also concur that unsatisfactory service delivery is a major concern in most municipalities due to corruption, political interference and lack of critical skills at all levels. Evidence shows that service delivery to the citizens has resulted in numerous service delivery protests (Masiya, Davids & Mangai, 2019). Service delivery protest has its origin in the Apartheid

regime, being used as a weapon for citizens to communicate their dissatisfaction on poor services and to target ethnically based structures. When it comes to the racial assessment, a report revealed that access to water and sanitation for Black Africans was very low (52%) compared with the other racial groups, according to the South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) (2015). The survey further revealed that rural dwellers were less satisfied (30%), followed by those inhabiting informal settlements (45%) (SASAS, 2015). With respect to access to electricity, 66% of citizens were satisfied at the national level between 2003 and 2015. However, the results suggest that Black Africans were least satisfied (63%) with the provision of electricity, as opposed to other races. When it comes to the satisfaction with refuse removal, the report indicates that Black Africans were the least satisfied (average of 44%), compared with other racial groups. In terms of access to low-cost housing, Black Africans were generally the least satisfied (30%), compared with Coloureds (40%) Indians (43%) and Whites (39%) (SASAS, 2015). It has been observed that since 1994 several protests have occurred due to service delivery failures (Zerihun & Mashigo, 2022).

2.5 The Determinants of Quality Service Delivery

The ability of local governments to provide consistently high-quality services is a concern for many citizens. Wang, Lo and Hui (2003) state that sustainable quality service is arguably the most critical factor that determines the credibility and reputation of the organisation. Throughout the literature, there exist several opinions on how service quality can be measured. For instance, Moon (2013) states that service quality measures the tangibility, communication, credibility, security, reliability and responsiveness of the service. Živković, Glogovac and Kovačević (2019) argue that functional and technical quality are the dimensions that must be considered when determining service quality. By contrast, in their conceptual model, Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988) propose four dimensions of measuring service quality delivery: reliability, responsibility, empathy, safety, and tangibility.

According to Parasuraman (1985), the first conceptualisations of service quality dimensions were based on Expectancy-disconfirmation theory which assumes that quality stems from comparing perceived with expected performance. Expectancy-disconfirmation theory is linked to the SERVQUAL model. In their study, Alharbi and Sayed (2017) note that, although the SERVQUAL model is used widely, it has been criticised by several authors. For instance, Buttle (1996) critiques

that the SERVQUAL model lacks theatrical and operational application. Nevertheless, these dimensions of quality service delivery are discussed below:

2.5.1 Tangibility

Tangibility forms an important component of the SERVQUAL model. Edike and Joseph (2020) believe that service quality is determined based on its tangibility. Tangible services denote the physical appearance of equipment and materials used to perform services. For Pakurár, Haddad, Nagy, Popp and Oláh (2019), tangibility comprises the physical aspect of the service provided to clients. Thus, tangibles measure physical attributes and approaches adopted to make the services available to clients as well as representations of the services including statements, speed and efficiency of transactions (Pakurár et al., 2019). In their study, Nyabundi, Aliata and Odondo (2021) conclude that an increase in tangibility leads to customer satisfaction.

2.5.2 Reliability

Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1985) state that service reliability measures the extent to which organisations provide a service correctly in the first instance. In other words, reliability is how organisations strive to meet their client expectations. Reliability is an important element of the SERVQUAL model (Edike & Joseph, 2020) that determines how an organisation can deliver a service accurately and dependably. A study by Ali and Raza (2017) reveals that service quality, including reliability, positively correlates with customer satisfaction. Muhamud (2017) insists that reliability is a key determinant of service quality. On the contrary, Arthur, Sekyere, Kantanubah, Marlle, and Banuenumah (2016) discovered that reliability has an insignificant effect on customer satisfaction because customers have higher expectations regarding promptness of the service, accuracy of the service, and safety or security of the service.

2.5.3 Assurance

Service assurance refers to the workers' courtesy, knowledge, and capacity to convince customers to have confidence and trust in a firm's service (Parasuraman et al., 1994). Scholars have varied opinions on service assurance (Pakurár et al., 2019). Gronroos (1998) posits that assurance is ranked first. On the contrary, Parasuraman et al. (1994) ranked it fourth. Pakurár et al. (2019) assume that assurance represents the process of keeping customers informed about the existence of a product or service. In their study, Jones and Shandiz (2015) see assurance as the ability and politeness to arouse trust and confidence in clients. Suharto (2015) establishes that assurance is an

antecedent of consumer satisfaction. On the contrary, Arthur et al. (2016) found that assurance and customer satisfaction are statistically insignificant.

2.5.4 Responsiveness

Edike and Joseph (2020) claim that responsiveness explains how a firm provides immediate service to meet customers' demands. This implies that customers' demands and inquiries must be addressed instantaneously. Parasuraman et al. (1994) highlight that service responsiveness represents employees' willingness to inform customers when the service will be available. According to Valarie, Mary and Dwayne (2017), service responsiveness represents the desire to assist clients and provide a quick service. In their study, Omar Ali, Norizan, Mohd Said, Mat and Jislan (2021) establish that service responsiveness positively impacted customer satisfaction. By contrast, Arthur et al. (2016) noted that not all five service quality dimensions, including responsiveness, contribute to customer satisfaction.

2.5.5 Empathy

Empathy involves providing customised services to customers exclusively; this is done when the organisation knows the customers' needs, preferences and names (Jones & Shandiz, 2015). Empathy measures how an organisation cares for and pays attention to its customers. Furthermore, Valarie et al. (2017) asserted that empathy aims to inform customers that their needs are unique and special. This implies that firms and their employees must identify customers' needs and preferences in order to satisfy them adequately. Ali et al. (2021) suggest that service empathy positively impacts customer satisfaction and retention. On the other hand, Arthur et al. (2016) claimed that empathy had no effect on customer satisfaction. Suharto (2015) expresses a similar opinion by stating that empathy is not one of the antecedents of consumer satisfaction.

2.5.6 Access to service

Access to service represents one of the determinants of measuring service quality. According to Yarimoglu (2015), access to service relates to approachability and ease of contact. Thus, access to service measures the availability of services to the customers when needed. Pakurár et al. (2019) also share a similar view that access to service is the ease and availability of the service. Flavian, Torres and Guinaliu (2004) find that access to service leads to customer satisfaction.

2.6 Stakeholders' Roles in Service Delivery in Local Governments

Zwane and Matsiliza (2022) state that stakeholders represent individuals who have a vested interest in an organisation. There are different stakeholders with a vested interest in service delivery, including community members, municipalities, suppliers, civil society groups, trade unions, employers' organisations and the media. The role of these stakeholders in public service delivery is elaborated below.

2.6.1 Community members

From participatory democracy and constitutional standpoints, community members, as crucial stakeholders, play a decisive role in service delivery worldwide (Zwane & Matsiliza, 2022). According to Madzivhandila and Maloka (2014), recently, there exists a paradigm shift in planning for service delivery, from a centralised approach to a more decentralised system. Thus, planning is seen as an inclusive approach in which community members are involved in service delivery issues. Community engagement is a strategic approach to addressing the developmental needs of the citizens (Madzivhandila & Maloka, 2014).

From the legislative point of view, local governments are required to engage their communities in development planning. In recent years, it has been found that communities are becoming more demanding by requiring more engagement (Christensen, 2018). Therefore, community participation is seen as a mechanism for improving service delivery. Mwankupili and Msilu (2020) postulate that to improve service quality, local governments must engage their constituents in service delivery affairs. Moreover, it has been argued that community participation promotes transparency and accountability in governance as well as creating ownership of development decisions (Bakre & Dorasamy, 2018). Community members play a vital role in service delivery through the provision of input into related matters (Maemu, 2021). Ng and Rahman (2021) propose that stakeholders use their knowledge and experience to participate in planning and development processes, thus promoting long-term community involvement and development in communities.

2.6.2 Municipalities

Zwane and Matsiliza (2022) acknowledge that based on Constitutional provisions, the national government supports municipalities through various grants to ensure provision of services and infrastructure. According to Zwane and Matsiliza (2022), municipalities are established to develop communities in their areas of jurisdiction. Their constitutional mandates include delivering

sustainable, reliable and efficient services to the community. Ahmad and Koech (2019) and Masuku and Jili (2019) remark that municipalities are required to deliver quality services to their constituents. Nevertheless, the current Auditor General 18/19 report mentions the failures of municipalities to live up to expectations through accountability. These failures contribute to service delivery protests, which have been increasing since 2004 (Nleya, 2011) as the lack of accountability from municipalities leave communities with no choice but to vent their frustrations through violent service-delivery protests (Sutton, 2019).

2.6.3 Suppliers

Suppliers are one of the most important stakeholders in service delivery (Lowasikou & Iravo, 2016). For example, most municipalities use a greater proportion of their resources to procure raw materials and equipment from suppliers to achieve the developmental needs of the community (Tshilo & van Niekerk, 2016). These findings suggest that suppliers promote the functioning of government entities. According to Tshilo and van Niekerk (2016), post-1994, local governments have been responsible for implementing a supply-chain management system to manage infrastructure. Despite the role of suppliers in service delivery, it has been found that many local governments have defaulted in payment to their suppliers (Anon, 2016).

2.6.4 Ward councillors and committees

Section 152(1) of the Constitution highlights the responsibilities of municipalities and provides direction for councillors regarding the acceptable ethical conduct in pursuing accountability, the provision of service delivery and socio-economic development. Also, Section 4(2) of the Municipal Structures Act (MSA) of 1998 provides the understanding of the role of ward councillors in service delivery. Thus, the Act provides guidelines to the Municipal Council about managing municipal resources (Khomo, Farisani & Mashau, 2023). In South Africa, councillors are expected to participate in decision-making apropos of public service delivery. Studies (Farisani, 2022; Schoeman & Chakwizira, 2023) reveal that councillors are active role players in the governance system and service delivery. Likewise, other researchers (D'Inverno, Vidoli & De Witte, 2023; Shava & Mazenda, 2021) concur that the legislative roles of councillors include providing quality services and sustainability of local livelihoods. Naidoo and Rampal (2019) suggest that municipalities can adapt to changing environments while being supported by ward councillors in processes, including the Integrated Development Plan (IDP).

To promote democratic governance, the ward committee system was introduced in December 2000, as per sections 72-78 of the MSA of 1998 (Thornhill & Madumo, 2011). The primary objective of creating this type of committee was to improve service delivery in local communities. Ward committees are seen as the mechanisms through which all stakeholders at ward level can contribute and effectively debate on the matters of their municipality. They can therefore play a role in encouraging and formulating interventions to promote public engagement and participation (Thornhill & Madumo, 2011). Furthermore, Thornhill and Madumo (2011) maintain that public participation in decision-making promotes quality service delivery in local governments.

Mtshali (2016) believes that ward committees are a good consultative vehicle to channel information to the community. These committees establish new partnerships with various people and organisations to bring about changes to the local communities through lobbying and decision-making. Sibiya (2016) argued that ward committees are given the power to be responsible for promoting participatory democracy in local municipalities. Also, Nomdo, Masiya and Khambule (2019) acknowledge that ward committees focus on aligning government policy at the national level to the local level by transmitting this to civil society, where their interests and objectives are defined. Zulu (2020) refers to ward committees being established to improve community participation. In addition, IDP Forums were established primarily to facilitate community participation wherein municipalities will account for the level of services and budgetary requirements required for the implementation of new community needs.

2.6.5 Interest groups

Worldwide, interest groups have been seen as important stakeholders that influence public policy formulation and implementation (Breunig & Koski, 2018). According to Christiansen (2017), interest groups, including trade unions, employers' organisations and civil society have enjoyed privileged access to public-sector organisations. In South Africa, the interest group structure is primarily determined by the racial and ethnic divisions within the population. For instance, social and political commentators have argued that there is a regional balance in the political party of the African National Congress (ANC) (Stewart, 2019). The governing party has transformed post-1994, from a party that was divided along ideological and constituent organisational lines. It has further been suggested that the governing party is more likely to build a new coalition of partners, outside the ANC, to help improve service delivery (Webster, 2022).

2.7 Nature of Services Expected from Municipalities

According to Schoute, Budding and Gradus (2018), public service delivery has witnessed several reforms across many local governments. In their study, Zondi, Nzimakwe and Mbili (2017) contend that local governments are tasked with delivery of quality services to their local constituents. The White Paper of 1998 highlights the principles which should guide local government in providing basic services, including accessibility, affordability, quality, sustainability and accountability. Furthermore, the White Paper requires councillors to facilitate access to essential services (Zondi et al., 2017). Moreover, the MSA of 2000 asserts that service delivery should be equitable and accessible. According to Mutiganda, Skoog and Igudia (2023), accessibility is a relevant component of the interpretative scheme that shapes the policy formulation and implementation process.

Apart from accessibility, the White Paper requires municipalities to provide affordable services to their constituents. The White Paper requires that services should be affordable to all citizens (Zondi et al., 2017). In recent times, there is an increased demand for quality services because it is believed that quality service results in customer satisfaction (For Romero-Subia, Jimber-del Rio, Ochoa-Rico & Vergara-Romero, 2022). Romero-Subia et al. (2022) advocated that quality service is the new component of service delivery that has drawn the attention of many scholars. In recent times, many policy reforms have aimed to improve service quality (Zarychta, 2020). Service quality represents a fundamental element of measuring government performance (Biswas & Roy, 2020), forcing many local governments to adopt approaches to ensure that the services offered to citizens meet quality standards (Filippetti, 2020). For this reason, the White Paper of 1998 expects South African municipalities to deliver quality service to their constituents. Zondi et al. (2017) postulate that although most municipalities struggle to provide quality service, the white paper highlights certain criteria for ensuring service quality, including suitability, timeframes, convenience, and responsiveness to the end users. In addition, the white paper requires municipalities to ensure accountability of services provided to the community.

According to Zondi et al. (2017), accountable service remains a key responsibility of local governments in improving quality service. It is recommended that accountability should include affordability and accessibility of the service to the target audience (Zondi et al., 2017). Moreover, Manamela (2021) states that accountability is a critical element that drives service delivery in a

democratic South Africa. Manamela (2021) continues that public servants are expected to deliver services following social accountability. However, Rulashe and Ijeoma (2022) contend that the lack of accountability, especially within the public service, has resulted in delivery protests.

The White paper further recommends that municipalities provide sustainable services to their communities. Patience and Nel (2021) have established that, although most local governments are doing well regarding service delivery, they face several impediments in providing sustainable services that will translate into economic growth and development. Also, Ditshego (2022) asserts that the growing population and increasing levels of unemployment have increased the dependency and demand for services, leading to service protests due to limited service delivery. Because of this, most municipalities struggle to offer sustainable services to their communities.

Tapela (2018) argues that providing sustainable services remains a critical challenge in South Africa. According to Bazaanah and Mothapo (2023), providing sustainable services became the primary responsibility of the local municipalities post-1994 elections. For instance, interventions and policies such as the Water Act were introduced to provide sustainable services for water and sanitation.

2.8 Perceptions towards Service Delivery in South African Local Governments

In South Africa, there is an ongoing debate about citizens' perceptions concerning the effectiveness of municipalities in delivering basic services to their constituents. However, Hanyane and Naidoo (2015) assert that studies relating to perceptions of public service provision are lacking. Notwithstanding this limitation, most studies have largely confirmed that South Africans are dissatisfied with public service delivery.

According to Asha (2014), most respondents expressed that service delivery is mainly unsatisfactory in the local governments. It has been found that citizen discontent with service delivery is attributed to critical success factors, including relative deprivation and inequality, broken trust, provision of substandard service, and mass poverty (Masiya, Davids & Mangai, 2019). In addition, Masuku, Mlambo and Ndlovu (2022) claim that there is still considerable mistrust in public-sector institutions regarding service delivery. Ledger (2021) shares a similar view that there is deep citizen discontent over basic service delivery by South African local governments. According to Ledger (2021), more than 80% of citizens could not pay for basic services provided by local governments.

A study by Mutyambizi, Mokhele, Ndinda and Hongoro (2020) found that most participants expressed dissatisfaction with service delivery. Mutyambizi et al. (2020) established that about 52% participants did not have access to electricity. On the contrary, Mengste, Teshome, Belete, Gizaw and Mulugeta (2020) found moderate customer satisfaction with service delivery in public service organisations.

2.9 Service Delivery Challenges facing Local Governments

There is consensus among scholars (Masiya, Davids & Mangai, 2019; Seddiky, 2019) that local governments worldwide encounter several challenges in delivering their mandates. These challenges are frustrating their efforts to provide quality public service to their constituents. For instance, Seddiky (2019) found that limited budget allocation, lack of coordination and information, insufficient skilled labour and corruption remain obstacles to service delivery. In their study, Magagula, Mukonza, Manyaka and Moeti (2022) argue that the cadre appointment has led to a shortage of skilled workers in most municipalities. “Cadre deployment policy is a legal framework that deals with the appointment by the government, at the behest of the governing party, of a party-political loyalist to an institution or body, independent or otherwise, as a means of circumventing public reporting lines and bringing that institution under the control of the party, as opposed to the State” (Swanepoel, 2022, p.449). The challenges that affect municipal service delivery are discussed below.

2.9.1 Financial constraints

Salaam (2018) posits that unsatisfactory service delivery in municipalities can be linked to a lack of funds. According to Magagula (2018), most district municipalities have limited access to revenue compared with the local municipalities to execute service delivery mandates. Masegare and Ngoepe (2018) claim that many local municipalities face budget under-spending, thus affecting community service delivery. Burger and Calitz (2021) acknowledge that post 2020 the national treasury has cut down the government budget due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In their study, Kalonda and Govender (2021) highlight that financial difficulties contribute to poor service delivery in Katima Mulilo Town Council, Namibia. Zerihun and Mashigo (2022) also confirm that the district municipality in Mpumalanga has limited access to finance to provide basic services to the community.

2.9.2 Lack of accountability

Lack of accountability over the past twenty-six years has created a barrier between the citizens and politicians elected to facilitate service delivery in their respective wards in South Africa (Muchadenyika, 2017). The continued outcry has led to several violent protests that have threatened the lives of the councillors with properties belonging to politicians even been torched in some areas. The Auditor-General expressed his dismay at the failures and disregard for accounting disciplines. These administrative and governance lapses have promoted weaker accountability measures, and consequently the abuse of public funds (AG 2018/19). The AG report for the 18/19 year points out that the absence of accountability is the main cause of the poor audit outcome in local governments. The reliance on consultants to perform duties assigned to municipal officials, and failures emanating from financial statements and financial reporting, come up sharply on the report. These findings can arguably be closely aligned with political appointments, in which skills and competencies do not form the criteria in selection and recruitment processes; rather cadre deployment takes precedence.

2.9.3 Political coalitions

In the 2021 municipal elections, the ANC failed to obtain the majority votes in Tshwane, Johannesburg, and Ekurhuleni (Joshua, James & Titos, 2022). This phenomenon suggests the need for co-governing coalitions. However, critiques of coalitions such as Joshua et al. (2022) argue that the differences in party policy agendas and principles may hamper the delivery of public services. Similarly, Masiya, Davids and Mangai (2019) found that the political coalitions have negatively impacted municipal functionality, leading to citizens' dissatisfaction with service delivery. On the contrary, in Indonesia, a study by Lewis and Hendrawan (2019) revealed that coalition governments reduce budget fraud in local government.

2.9.4 Lack of capacity

Evidence suggests that most local governments lack the capacity to provide basic services (Kroukamp, 2016). It was found that a lack of capacity is a significant barrier to quality service delivery in local governments (Sekgala, 2016). Likewise, Ramutsheli and Van Rensburg (2015) state that local governments fail to achieve their objectives due to inadequate human resources and a shortage of skills. Kalonda and Govender (2021) believe that, although municipalities strive to provide basic service, they lack skilled professionals and workers to deliver their mandates.

According to Mabizela and Matsiliza (2020), the shortage of technical and managerial skills in most municipalities contributes to poor service delivery. Likewise, the Institute for Democratic Alternatives in South Africa (2019) reported that most public-sector appointees lack the skills and knowledge to function well. Thusi and Chauke (2023) assert that most municipalities are facing a challenge in retaining scarce skills to compete with other private entities. Thusi and Chauke (2023) advocate that turnover of skilled workers is a key challenge affecting service delivery and is a costly exercise for the South African government. It is believed that when scarce-skilled employees exit an organisation, this creates vacant positions, leading to poor service delivery.

2.9.5 Political deployment

Salaam (2018) posits that a contributing factor to poor service delivery is political interference in local government affairs. Political appointments emanating from cadre deployment is a very sensitive topic in local municipalities. Salaam (2018) remarks that political parties employ people who understand the vision and strategy framework which is the manifesto used during the party election campaign. There are good and bad sides of political deployment. The bad refers to leniency on consequence-management and poor or lack of oversight from the politicians as they protect their own. It becomes very problematic when cadre deployment promotes anarchy, where deployees are placed into positions for which they are not qualified (Kroukamp & Cloete, 2018). According to Masuku and Jili (2019), political favours and interferences in municipalities hinder quality service delivery.

2.9.6 Poor leadership

Ndevu and Muller (2017) contend that most leaders in South African municipalities are politically appointed, affecting quality service delivery. Mbandlwa, Dorasamy and Fagbadebo (2020) remarked that local governments have experienced leadership challenges, which have major implications on municipal service delivery. Kalonda and Govender (2021) also confirm that lack of quality service delivery in local government could be linked to a lack of leadership. Another study reveals that a lack of leadership ethics has resulted in several leadership challenges, compromising public service delivery (Mbandlwa, Dorasamy & Fagbadebo, 2020).

2.9.7 Poor recruitment practices

Kalonda and Govender (2021) find that recruitment practices have been ignored, especially by the local councillors in most South African municipalities. These findings are consistent with those of

Meyer and Venter (2014), who state that, in most municipalities, recruitment and selection practices have mostly been overlooked, resulting in unsatisfactory service delivery. Therefore, it is a challenge for selection committees to appoint competent and qualified applicants because of their polarization by political dominance. This institutional interference and lack of capacity are the major barriers to quality service delivery in most local governments. Furthermore, a study by Makapela, and Mtshelwane (2021) reveals that most HR managers in South African municipalities do not have clear guidance regarding recruitment and selection policy. Therefore, this affects their ability to appoint the right caliber of persons to occupy positions, especially strategic positions.

2.9.8 Corruption

The term corruption is a controversial topic with varied views worldwide. The term corruption has been described as an unethical practice not morally acceptable in the municipal environment (Mabeba, 2021). In other words, corruption can be defined as the abuse of one's position in the workplace to fulfill personal interests or interests of a particular group of individuals a municipal official is associated with. In Western nations, public administrations are marked by strict separation between officials of private interests and public responsibilities. However, this is not the case in Africa. Rampant corruption has been the most discussed phenomenon within the African political discourse, especially in the post-colonial era. For instance, the African Union (AU) estimates that nearly a quarter of the Gross Domestic Product of African states (US$500 billion in 2017) was lost through corruption (Mlambo, Mubecua & Mlambo, 2023). According to Mlambo et al. (2023), despite the role of liberation movements in the struggle for freedom, they have become a burden to Africa's development through increased corruption, poor governance, political instability, and the failure to consolidate a shared vision for Africa's development.

Corruption remains a critical challenge confronting South Africa. This challenge affects not only the country but also the quality of service delivery in most municipalities. Mlambo et al. (2023) observe that in South Africa, corruption has been a widespread phenomenon, predominantly post the1994 elections. Sebola (2015) claims that corruption is the common problem facing the local governments. Mbandlwa et al. (2020) find that limited mechanisms for fighting corruption have compromised public service delivery. In a recent study, Mabeba (2021) confirms that corruption remains the leading factor accounting for service delivery protests. Thusi and Jili (2023) observe that political office bearers lack the political will to fight corruption which has crippled the local

government's ability to provide quality services. Mantzaris (2017) argues that in South Africa and Russia, rampant corruption negatively impacts the human rights of most citizens, ultimately leading to the lack of delivery of the most basic services. Many scholars (Mabeba, 2021; Ngcamu & Mantzaris, 2023) have confirmed that corruption is one of the topical challenges confronting South African municipalities, resulting in poor service delivery and protests. From the discussion, it can be argued that corruption in South Africa has been a formidable hindrance to the country's lack of trust in public services for years. Thus, corruption in the South African public service has eroded the principles associated with the public service in the country, including equality, neutrality, representativeness and accountability.

2.10 Approaches to Improving Service Delivery in Local Governments

Mkhatshwa-Ngwenya and Khumalo (2020) propose that municipalities design and introduce skills-development initiatives to focus on addressing the needs of the municipality. Furthermore, the authors suggest that to enhance service delivery, municipalities monitor and evaluate the performance of Section 57 administrators and political office bearers, especially those who consistently underperform. Masilo, Masiya and Mathebula (2021) also recommend that organisations develop and implement plans for monitoring the utilisation of performance information to assist in planning and decision-making.

According to Nzimakwe (2015), adopting the spirit and practice of innovation is the prerequisite for improving public service. For Naidoo and Xollie (2011), there is a need for an integrated leadership approach and training and development programmes to enhance the competencies in public service. Schoeman and Chakwizira (2023) postulate that a simplified performance-management technique must be implemented to improve service delivery. In a related study, Armstrong and Taylor (2020) propose that local governments need to be accountable and effective. George, Drumaux, Joyce and Longo (2020) believe that local governments need to adopt strategic management practices in public administration. According to George et al. (2020), strategic management has received much attention in public-sector organisations and is fast becoming relevant in practice because of new public management changes. George et al. (2020) advocated that strategic planning be a specific approach that can enable effective strategising in public-sector organisations. Community engagement and participation of stakeholders in local government affairs will contribute to improved service delivery (Malemane & Nel-Sanders, 2021). In addition,

it is believed that the excluding of local communities from decision-making processes will result in the failure of government interventions, leading to poor service delivery (Malemane & Nel-Sanders, 2021).

Undeniably, the selection of competent or qualified candidates, especially in public-sector service delivery, remains a critical challenge for most government entities. Therefore, it is recommended that the selection committee appoint the right candidates to the right positions (Motsoeneng & Kahn, 2013). South African municipalities can save financial costs or resources by appointing competent and skilled people because the appointment of these people is considered a financial investment by most organisations.

Sibanda (2012) suggests that monitoring customer-focused service delivery is an important means of improving service delivery. Gonu, Agyei, Richard and Asare-Larbi (2023) argue that customer orientation significantly influences customer satisfaction and service delivery. Therefore, Gonu et al. (2023) recommend that institutions and policymakers develop comprehensive policies and customer-orientation interventions to enhance customer satisfaction and service delivery.

According to Khawam, DiDona and Hernández (2017), teamwork offers better results for organisations than individual work. Therefore, it is suggested that teamwork is the most effective work form to improve organisational performance. Schmutz, Meier and Manser (2019) confirm that teamwork and organisational performance are positively correlated. Similarly, Askari, Asghri, Gordji, Asgari, Filipe and Azar (2020) admit that collaborative effort from teamwork improves productivity and organisational efficiency.

Thusi and Jili (2023) recommend that to improve service delivery, politicians and political office-bearers need to demonstrate the political will to fight corruption. Phahlane (2021) suggests that the fight against corruption requires reliable and proactive policies and strategies.

Ngilambi and McCubbin (2017) confirm that effective communication between municipal officials and all stakeholders is required to provide services more effectively. Ngilambi and McCubbin (2017) believe that municipal officials should provide stakeholders with the opportunity to provide inputs into service provision, especially when new projects and changes are required.

2.11 The Theoretical Framework

Collins and Stockton (2018) maintain that applying theories in research is a continuous debate in knowledge production. A theory is an abstract concept or idea that explains a phenomenon (Collins & Stockton, 2018). According to Eriksson-Zetterquist, Hansson and Nilsson (2021), a theory is an analytical tool that provides novel and vital discoveries and explanations of an event. In this study, the theoretical framework is important because it provides a deeper understanding and meaningfulness to the research project. In addition, the theoretical framework allows the researcher to observe and explain relationships between concepts.

Although several theories have been applied in research that relate to service delivery, this study is supported by the Expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm (EDP). Over the past two decades, literature reviews have shown that the EDP model has been the dominant theoretical lens for measuring customer satisfaction (Grimmelikhuijsen & Porumbescu, 2017; Van Ryzin, 2006). The primary idea behind the EDP theory is that satisfaction is based on referent and perceived performance (Oliver, 1977; 1980). While referent performance involves computing the discrepancy between desires and assessments of performance, perceived performance relies on the judgment scales to assess confirmation or disconfirmation, including "better than expected to worse than expected" (Spreng, MacKenzie & Olshavsk, 1996). According to Zhang et al. (2022), the EDP theory goes beyond earlier approaches to provide a better understanding of customer satisfaction.

This theoretical framework is useful in this study because it provides a better explanation of community satisfaction with public services (Zhang, Chen, Petrovsky and Walker, 2022). Therefore, when applied, the EDP theory provides adequate understanding of the stakeholders' perceptions toward service delivery in the Umzumbe Local Municipality. Hence, in this case, the EDP model will help understand customer and community satisfaction toward service delivery in the Umzumbe Local Municipality.

2.12 The Conceptual Model

Contrary to a theoretical framework, a conceptual model helps draw conclusions, map out the constructs measured in the study, and explain the link between the research variables. Therefore, in this study, the conceptual model provides clear and concise knowledge of the key constructs,

relationships and assumptions underpinning the research. Figure 2.1 is the conceptual model that explains the variables and their relationships in the study.

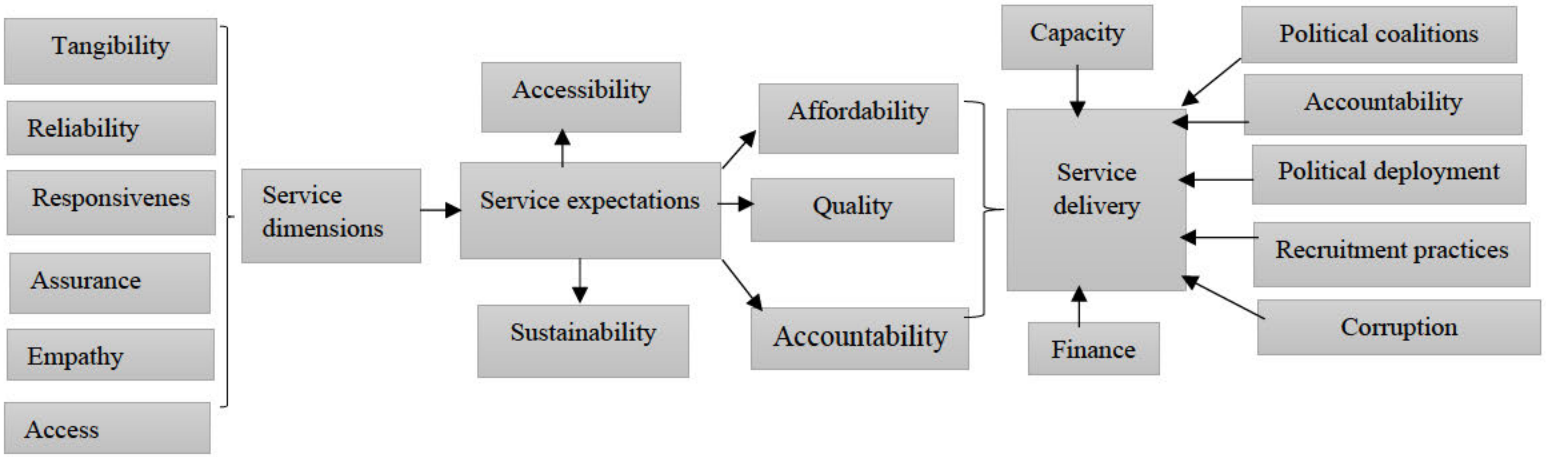

Figure 2.1 Service quality dimensions, expectations and critical service factors

Source: Adapted from Parasuraman et al. (1988, p.31)

The study adapts the SERVQUAL model developed by scholars such as Parasuraman et al. (1988) to measure the dimensions of quality service. As seen in the model, service dimensions include but not limited to tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and access (Parasuraman et al., 1988). According to MacDougall and Snetsinger (1990), service tangibility measures the extent to which a service portrays its concrete image. Rushton and Carson (1989) postulate that tangibility allows customers to evaluate the offering before and post-purchase. Besides, reliability constitutes an essential aspect of the service dimension. It determines the ability of the service provider to offer such services dependably and accurately. In their study, Johnson and Nilsson (2018) posit that service quality researchers believe reliability is an important measure of service delivery. In addition to the above, it is believed that responsiveness represents the accurate measure of service dimension, which assesses the willingness and promptness of the service provider to offer the service (Parasuraman et al., 1988). A study by Lagat and Uyoga (2019) reveals that customer responsiveness is critical for the service industry, and when appropriately handled, it can improve service delivery. Assurance, another aspect of the service dimension, measures the employees' ability to win customer trust and confidence based on their knowledge of service delivery (Parasuraman et al., 1988). According to Chege (2022), customers who perceive service assurance are more likely to experience higher satisfaction than customers who do not. Empathy is also another service dimension that measures the caring and loving attitude of workers towards customers (Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Berry, 1990). Empathy reduces anti-social behaviours, discrimination, and unethical conduct in service settings (Bove, 2019). Access to service is the recent measurement of service dimension, which provides customers access to the service by registering with the provider (Fritze, Marchand, Eisingerich & Benkenstein, 2020).

The model shows that customers or citizens have certain expectations of service delivery, such as accessibility, sustainability, accountability, affordability and quality. Masiya, Davids and Mangai (2019) argue that the MSA of 2000 requires that municipal service be equitable and accessible to all citizens. Service accessibility has been conceptualised as the extent to which a firm provides customers access to the service (Fritze et al., 2020). Mutyambizi, Mokhele, Ndinda and Hongoro (2020) maintain that the South African government sees access to services as the fundamental means for improving living standards and local economic development.

Service sustainability also constitutes one of the expectations of citizens. Under the provision of the MSA of 2000, it is a requirement that municipal service delivery addresses the environmental needs of the people. According to Mutyambizi et al. (2020), sustainability concerns with the long-term delivery and benefits of evidence-based interventions. It is suggested that municipal services be financially and environmentally sustainable to meet customers' expectations (Masiya et al., 2019).

As discussed above, Section 71(1) of the Act promotes accountability by holding the government and civil servants accountable for their stewardship. Thus, accountability forms a central pillar in public service delivery. According to Rana, Ali, Riaz and Irfan (2019), accountability is critical in public service because it promotes efficient service delivery, ultimately strengthening democracy. However, the absence of accountability in public service will undermine public trust, thereby impacting service delivery.

The white paper suggests that services should be affordable to all citizens (Zondi et al., 2017). However, recently, there have been increasing concerns about how privatisation and market-liberalisation reforms, especially in the public utility industries, have affected low-income earners in developing economies. The escalating utility prices have raised real and growing affordability problems for several people in developed and developing nations, including South Africa.

Romero-Subia et al. (2022) state that quality service is the new service delivery component that has drawn many scholars' attention. In recent times, there is an increased demand for quality services because it is believed that quality service results in customer satisfaction. In light of this, many policy reforms have aimed to improve service quality (Zarychta, 2020).

Moreover, as depicted in the model, service delivery is affected, whether negatively or positively, by corruption, capacity, political coalitions, budgetary or financial constraints, accountability, recruitment practices and political deployment. Corruption is a "behaviour or conduct that deviates from the normal duties of a public role" (Nye, 1967, p.966). According to Mabeba (2021), corruption is a challenge impacting service delivery.

Capacity represents the skills, knowledge, competencies and experience required by a person to execute a particular task. In other words, it denotes the number of employees an organisation needs to perform certain tasks. Although the demand for service delivery keeps increasing, most

municipalities are under-capacitated. According to Ndevu and Muller (2018), poor service delivery can be attributed to a lack of capacity.

Generally speaking, budget allocation represents the amount of spending allocated to each government expenditure line. Salaam (2018) posits that unsatisfactory service delivery in municipalities can be linked to a lack of funds. Magagula (2018) concurs that most district municipalities have limited access to revenue compared with the local municipalities to execute service delivery mandates.

According to Rana, Ali, Riaz and Irfan (2019), the new open administration requires accountability of public service to provide efficient services to the citizens. Unfortunately, accountability is a critical challenge in South African municipalities, affecting service delivery. Muchadenyika (2017) opine that lack of accountability over the past twenty-six years has created a barrier between the citizens and politicians elected to facilitate service delivery in their respective wards.

Human capital plays a vital role in a country's development (Konateh, Duramany-Lakkoh, & Udeh, 2023). Therefore, a well-functioning recruitment process can be used to attract and appoint candidates with the requisite skills, qualifications, and competencies required to perform public and improve service delivery. However, Kalonda and Govender (2021) find that recruitment practices have been ignored, especially by the local councillors in most South African municipalities. Meyer and Venter (2014) state that in most municipalities, recruitment and selection practices have mostly been overlooked, resulting in unsatisfactory service delivery.

In South Africa, political deployment has caused 'turbulence that has undermined the morale of public servants and citizens' confidence in the public service (Ndevu & Muller, 2018). Political deployment becomes very problematic when it promotes anarchy, where deployees are placed into positions for which they are not qualified (Kroukamp & Cloete, 2018). In their study, Masuku and Jili (2019) point out that political favours and interferences in municipalities hinder quality service delivery because of the divergent interests of the parties and other stakeholders.

Theoretically, the model provides a better understanding of measuring service expectations in South African municipalities. In addition, it explains the critical success factors that influence service delivery.

2.13 Chapter Summary

The review suggested that the most common service dimensions include tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, and access. Furthermore, it was discovered that several stakeholders play critical roles in service delivery within local governments. Several factors are crucial to effective service delivery, including accessibility, affordability, quality, sustainability and accountability. The extant literature suggests that most South Africans are dissatisfied with the service provided by local governments. Also, the review shows that limited funding, lack of capacity, political interference, and corruption are major obstacles to service delivery in South Africa.

Chapter three below describes the research methods adopted in the study.

Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Chapter Three describes the methods and approaches used in the study to address the research questions and objectives. The justification for adopting each approach or method is provided in this chapter. It describes the paradigm and research design underpinning the study. The research approach and method adopted to investigate the subject matter are also part of the discussion in this chapter. Also, Chapter Three outlines the study location, population and sampling procedures and sample size. The data-collection instrument and data-analysis process used are further elaborated in the chapter. The latter part describes the ethical considerations and research limitations of the study.

3.2 Research Paradigm

Haigh, Kemp, Bazeley and Haigh (2019) and Rehman and Alharthi (2016) state that the research paradigm represents the basic assumption and belief system related to ontology, epistemology, methodology and axiology. Ejnavarzala (2019) claims that ontology is concerned with conditions relating to material, social, cultural, and political issues. Epistemology concerns the theories of knowledge (Ejnavarzala, 2019). Methodology has been described as the method for collecting and analysing data. Axiology concerns ethical considerations that form part of a study. Thus, axiology is a philosophical approach that deals with decisions relating to values and rights (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

Perera (2018) believes that a research paradigm is a model representing the researcher's worldviews, mindsets, and ideologies. This includes positivism, interpretivism, and pragmatism. However, interpretivism was adopted as the research paradigm most suited to this study as it assisted in exploring the perceptions of ward committees, ward councillors and municipal senior officials toward service delivery. According to Berryman (2019), interpretivism assumes that social construction, language, shared consciousness, and social interactions are the vital means of interpreting events in the social world. Berryman (2019) proposes that in order for interpretivism researchers to find answers to their research questions, they must organise their questions in a manner that addresses the understanding of "how and why". The study adopted interpretivism because it helped appreciate stakeholders' different perceptions of service delivery in the

Umzumbe Local Municipality. Moreover, interpretivism helped the researcher to understand the stakeholders' knowledge of service delivery.

3.3 Research Design

Asenahabi (2019) defines research design as the overall strategy adopted by the investigator to examine various components of a study coherently to address the chosen phenomenon effectively. It aims to link the research problem to achievable research, whilst providing direction for the procedures employed in the study (Creswell, 2014). The study utilised an exploratory design to explore the stakeholders' (i.e., ward committees, ward councillors and municipal senior officials) perceptions towards service delivery.

According to Rahi (2017), exploratory designs aim to discover new insights about an event. Thus, exploratory studies seek to find answers to questions and to evaluate the phenomenon from a new perspective. Exploratory studies are mostly conducted when there exists limited information on a particular research topic (Engel & Schutt, 2016; Makri & Neely, 2021). An exploratory research design was adopted, given that there was limited knowledge related to stakeholders' (i.e., ward committees, ward councillors and municipal senior officials) perceptions regarding service delivery in the Umzumbe Local Municipality. Therefore, an exploratory research design provided more insight into the research phenomenon.

3.4 Research Approach

The study adopts the inductive approach to explore the perceptions towards service delivery. The inductive method has its root in qualitative research or the interpretivist paradigm (Kelliher, 2011). Researchers adopting the inductive approach are interested in collecting qualitative information from the research participants through a field study. According to Kim (2021), the inductive approach begins with research and building a theory, then investigating and observing to identify a generalised theory. With this approach, the researcher begins with collecting relevant data related to the research phenomenon. Having collected substantial data, the researcher then develops an empirical generalisation to gain an overview of the subject matter.

Liu (2016) suggests that the inductive approach is used to find answers to how and why an event occurs. Thus, inductive research goes beyond the mere description of an event to adequately explaining and exploring the event. The inductive approach enabled the investigator to discover more information about service delivery in Umzumbe Local Municipality.

3.5 Research Method

The study relied on a qualitative research methodology. Cleland (2017) advocates that qualitative research is useful in probing questions that are impossible to quantify in numbers and to understand human experiences. Qualitative research is an approach to investigation that enables the researcher to collect in-depth information because of his/her involvement in the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Thus, qualitative studies are mainly conducted to provide sufficient explanation and description of a particular event. Busetto, Wick and Gumbinger (2020) point out that qualitative research involves the study of a phenomenon. Moreover, Nassaji (2020) acknowledges that qualitative study involves collecting and analysing non-numerical data. This method of research was adopted because it provides an adequate understanding of a particular event. Moreover, the study adopted a qualitative research approach because it was well suited to revealing, exploring, and understanding the perceptions held by municipality stakeholders regarding service delivery at the municipality.

3.6 Research Location

The study was conducted in Umzumbe Local Municipality. Umzumbe Local Municipality is located along the coastal strip of the Indian Ocean between uMthwalume and Mfazazana. The municipality can be found in the Ugu District Municipality within KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa. Most people (60%) living in the Umzumbe Local Municipality have a low income, reflecting a situation of acute impoverishment. In recent times, Umzumbe Local Municipality has come under the spotlight due to poor service delivery and inadequate infrastructure (Zondi & Qwabe, 2022). Figure 3.1 is the municipal map showing Umzumbe Local Municipality.

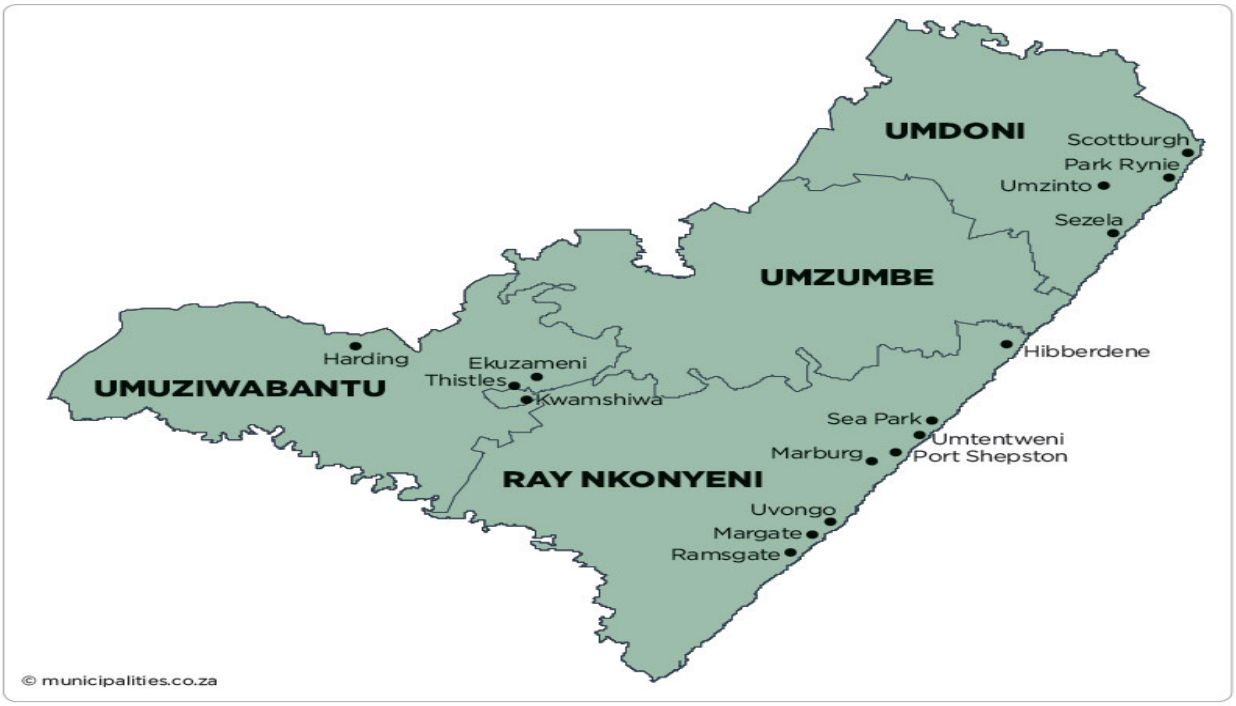

Figure 3.1: Geographical location of Umzumbe Local Municipality

Source: Umzumbe Local Municipality Map - KwaZulu-Natal (2023)

3.7 Target Population

The target population presents individuals or objects from which the researcher intends to draw inferences (Rahi, 2017). Similarly, Sekaran and Bougie (2019) defined a population as the specified group of respondents from which the investigators intend to draw inferences. The target population for this study was approximately 100 participants, including councillors, Amakhosi (local chiefs), ward committee members, officials, and chairpersons of the ward committee of the Umzumbe Local Municipality. As discussed previously, to promote democratic governance, the ward committee system was introduced in December 2000, per sections 72-78 of the MSA of 1998 (Thornhill & Madumo, 2011). The primary object for creating this committee is to improve service delivery in local communities. Table 3.1 shows the distribution of the target population.

Table 3.1 Target population

Stakeholder Groups	Number
Councillors (ward chair, mayor & speaker)	12
Municipal Officials	28
Umzumbe Business forum Chairperson	1
Umzumbe Rate payer's association	15
Non-Profit Organisations	44
Total Population	100

3.8 Sampling Strategy

The study adopted a non-probability sampling strategy to select the research participants from the overall research population. Sekaran and Bougie (2019) acknowledge that non-probability sampling is a subjective or non-statistical tool used to select samples. The non-probability sampling strategy utilised in this study is known as purposive sampling (Eftekharian & Razmkhah, 2017). Purposive sampling is mainly used when the researcher intends to select participants with adequate knowledge of a particular research topic. Elfil and Negida (2017) state that this sampling procedure is used to select the subjects or cases deliberately based on the investigator's choice. This purposive sampling strategy helped to select participants who had adequate knowledge regarding perceptions of service delivery at the Umzumbe Local Municipality.

3.9 Sample Size and Procedures

Sample size determination in qualitative research has been debated for years (Vasileiou, Barnett, Thorpe & Young, 2018). While Britten (1995) recommends that the qualitative sample size ranges from 50 to 60, Thorogood and Green (2018) propose that the sample size be at most 20 participants. On the contrary, Sekaran and Bougie (2019) recommended that selecting samples from the whole population is impossible and suggested that the sample size in a qualitative study be between 7 to 30 participants.

Given the target population and method of investigation, 14 participants (committee chairpersons, ward councillors and senior municipal officials) were selected for the study. These participants were chosen because they are involved in service delivery in the Umzumbe Local Municipality. Also, the participants were selected due to their knowledge and experience of service delivery in the Umzumbe Local Municipality. Because of their unavailability, the researcher could not collect data from the other two stakeholder groups (Umzumbe rate payer's association and non-profit organisations). Table 3.2 shows the eventual distribution of the sample.

Table 3.2 Distribution of the sample size

Stakeholder Groups	**Number of samples**
Ward committee chairpersons	11
Ward councillors	1
Senior municipal officials	2
Total sample size	**14**

3.10 Data collection

The data was collected through focus group discussions with particular stakeholder groups from the Municipality, including ward committee chairpersons, ward councillors and senior municipal officials. Focus group discussions are conducted when the researcher intends to collect high-quality data in social contexts from the viewpoint of the participants (Lobe, Morgan & Hoffman, 2020). A focus group discussion facilitates discussion among group members, which helps in collecting in-depth information. The focus group method is a structured and organised method of data collection led by a trained moderator (Gundumogula & Gundumogula, 2020). Furthermore, Gundumogula and Gundumogula (2020) postulate that focus group interviews provide more insights into a particular subject matter than do ordinary interviews. It is also argued that focus group interviews are aimed at obtaining an adequate understanding of social issues (Nyumba, Wilson, Derrick & Mukherjee, 2018). A predetermined interview schedule was constructed and distributed to the participants beforehand, allowing them to become familiar with the interview questions (Please refer to Appendix A).

The extant literature shows that no consensus exists among qualitative experts on the composition of focus groups. Thus, researchers have mixed opinions about the ideal size of a focus group. For

instance, while Krueger (1994) proposes that a focus group should range between 3-12 members, Twinn (1998) recommends that it should range from 4-5 members. On the other hand, Morgan (1988) and Ruyter (1996) suggest that a focus group should have between 5-6 members. The participants were divided into six groups, with groups A, B and E having 2 members respectively, while groups C and D had 4 members, respectively. The data collection occurred between September and October 2023. Each focus group discussion lasted between 60-80 minutes. Table 3.3 shows the composition of each group.

Table 3.3 Composition of the focus group discussions

Group Composition	**Participants**
Group A	2 Ward committees
Group B	2 Ward committees
Group C	4 Ward committees
Group D	4 Senior municipal officials
Group E	1 Ward committee and 1 ward councilor

The focus groups A, B and E had 2 members each, while groups C and D had 4 members because of the availability of the participants. The composition of groups C and D are consistent with the recommendation by scholars (Klly, Bourgeault & Dingwall, 2010; Stalmeijer, McNaughton & Van Mook, 2014; Twinn, 1998), whereas the rest of the groups are not. Although scholars (Kelly et al., 2010; Stalmeijer, McNaughton & Van Mook, 2014) have recommended that the appropriate group size ranges from 4 to 12 participants, Muijeen, Kongvattananon and Somprasert (2020) advocate that the number of participants in the focus group depends on their same experience because some experiences take a long time to discuss and, for this reason, the group should be small. Furthermore, Muijeen et al. (2020) argue that focus groups vary depending on the research objective.

Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) suggest that a good focus group interview should contribute thematically to knowledge production as well as dynamically to promoting a good interview interaction. It is believed that developing initial focus group interview questions forms part of the research process and requires thought and planning regarding what to probe and how to do so

(Rubin & Rubin, 2012). According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), first, the structure of the focus group interview questions lies with the investigator's expertise and prior knowledge about the subject matter. The focus group interview questions are more likely to be broad if the researcher is not knowledgeable about the topic they plan to investigate. Contrary to the above assertion, it must be noted that the researcher had an adequate understanding of the research phenomenon given his experience and knowledge of service delivery issues in South African local governments.

Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) propose that the focus group interview questions need to elicit an in-depth response relevant to the topic of interest. In this study, the researcher ensured that the focus group interview questions were aligned with the research questions and phenomenon under investigation. Thus, the researcher ensured that the focus group interview questions do not fall outside the stated research questions and objectives. The focus group interview questions were carefully worded in a way that was easy to understand and framed in a way that allowed the research participants to share freely.

Moreover, Brinkman and Kvale (2015) recommend that the focus group interview process should remain flexible and allow the researcher to ask follow-up questions based on what the research participant communicates during the interview. Probes help the investigator to manage the flow of the interview, and keep the interviewees engaged in the interview process as well as on the topic (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Based on the recommendation by Brinkman and Kvale (2015), the researcher decided to conduct unstructured focus group interviews to probe further into questions that the participants did not adequately answer.

It is a requirement that the researcher obtain permission from the participants before the interview begins. As part of the ethical considerations, the researcher received approval from the University of KwaZulu-Natal Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. According to Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, p.154), there may be some tension or anxiety at the end of an interview, as the subject has been open about personal and sometimes emotional experiences and may be wondering about the purpose and later use of the interviews. Therefore, it is recommended that researchers value and protect the participants and remain sensitive and responsive to their needs by incorporating a plan to debrief the participants, into their research design (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Following this recommendation, the researcher debriefed the focus group participants on the purpose of the study and what the data would be used for.

3.11 Data-quality Assurance

Data quality remains an important issue in field research. Since this was a qualitative study, trustworthiness criteria was applied to assure the quality of the collected data. In this study, qualitative data assurance was assessed through the following: clarification and justification; procedural rigour; representativeness; interpretative rigour; reflexivity and evaluative rigour and transferability.

According to Grbich, Kitto and Chesters (2008), in all research, the clarity of the research question reflects the aims of the study to help evaluate results and interpretations. It is suggested that the demonstration of theoretical rigour (the soundness of fit of the research question, aims and research methods appropriate to the research problem) is critical in every research (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005). In this study, the researcher ensured that the research aims, questions and methods are adequately described and justified.

Procedural rigour in qualitative research concerns the transparency or "explicitness" of the description of how the study was conducted (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005). Researchers such as Hansen (2020) and Thorogood and Green (2018) state that procedural rigour describes issues such as accessing subjects, developing rapport and trust, data collection procedures, data analysis, and accounts of how errors or subject refusals are dealt with. In this study, the participants were accessed after obtaining written permission from the management of Umzumbe Local Municipality. Moreover, the data collection and analysis procedures were adequately described.

In all forms of research, it is a requirement that the sample be representative of the target population or participants (Grbich et al., 2008). To eliminate bias and ensure a representative sample, the researcher ensured that a representative sample was drawn from all the stakeholder groups in the Umzumbe Local Municipality.

Interpretative rigour concerns the full demonstration of the data or research findings. In qualitative research, a commonly used term is inter-rater reliability (Grbich et al., 2008). Inter-rater reliability involves triangulation, where multiple data collection instruments or research methods are used to investigate the subject matter. Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005) state that triangulation increases the validity and reliability of the study by providing a more complex and nuanced understanding of the possible interpretations of the research objectives. In this study, the researcher re-probed the

participants to confirm their answers to the research questions. The process helped ensure the validity of the research findings.

Reflexivity concerns the process where researchers openly recognise and address the influence of the relationship among the researchers, the research phenomenon and the subjects on the research findings (Thorogood Green, 2018). Reflexivity requires a demonstration by the researchers that they are aware of the sociocultural position they inhabit and how their value systems influence the selection of the research problem, research design, data collection and analysis (Grbich, 1999). The researcher had adequate knowledge of the research setting and social context of the study location. Also, the researcher interacted with the subjects adequately to get a clear picture of the subject matter being investigated.

Transferability represents the process of generalising the research findings to similar or different contexts (Tobin & Begley, 2004). While this study was case study research, enabling the researcher to understand the research phenomenon, the findings cannot be generalised to similar settings.

3.12 Data Analysis

There are various tools available for analysing qualitative data. However, NVivo helped to organise, index, code, and analyse the data effectively (Robins & Eisen, 2017). The NVivo software has its roots in Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing, Searching and Theorizing (NUD*IST) software which is a qualitative data analysis program commonly used in qualitative research. Thematic analysis was employed via this software to identify and analyse themes originating from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Dawadi (2021) argues that thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis method for systematically organising and analysing complex qualitative data sets. This process of thematic analysis assisted in the search for themes and patterns from the research participants' narratives. Such themes and patterns were fully described in the Findings and Discussions chapters to follow.

There are different steps involved in qualitative thematic analysis, however, the study adopted processes recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006). The authors proposed six steps of qualitative thematic analysis (familiarisation with the data, generating the initial codes, search for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and producing the report). These steps are described below.

i. Familiarisation with the data

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), data familiarisation is the initial stage in the thematic process where the researcher breaks down the data set from the data corpus, reads the entire data set, and actively engages with the data by searching for patterns of meaning. At this stage, having transcribed the data, the researcher began searching for patterns. Here, the researcher made notes that linked the interviewees' statements to the data. The researcher read the transcribed data several times to become familiar with the data.

ii. Generate the initial codes

Having been familiar with the data, the researcher is required to generate initial codes identified in the data set. Braun and Clarke (2006) state that code are labels applied to segments of data which are likely to be relevant in the context of the research question. Codes are the building blocks of analysis; without them, no meaningful analysis can be carried out (Braun & Clarke, 2012). During this phase of the thematic analysis, the entire data set was organised into meaningful groups. Firstly, all data extracts were coded. Secondly, all data extracts with similar codes were grouped. The researcher ensured that the codes identified in the data set were given explicit boundaries to ensure they were not interchangeable.

iii. Search for themes

After generating the initial codes from the data set, the researcher is required to search for relevant themes that relate to the research topic. This phase begins when the data set has been coded and individual codes have been collated. Braun and Clarke (2006) propose that at this phase, the researcher should address the crucial question of what does and does not count as a theme. Based on the data set, the researcher identified the main and sub-themes that form the basis of the analysis and discussion. The most prudent way to conceptualise patterns and their relationships within the data is by visualising them in one or more thematic maps. Mind mapping - which involves creating a drawing or visual representation of the data - helped the researcher to organise the codes into themes and to see the relationships between such themes.

iv. Review themes

This phase concerned developing provisional or candidate themes into final themes. Braun and Clarke (2006, p.91) recommend that “data within themes should cohere together meaningfully, while there should be clear and identifiable distinctions between themes.” The activities involved

in this phase include, for instance, reorganizing coded data extracts, grouping two provisional themes, renaming a theme, and abandoning another. The preliminary themes were refined during this phase to ensure that the main and sub-themes accurately represented the data set. Having refined the themes, some collapsed into one another, while others were separate themes by themselves.

v. Define and name themes

In this phase, the names of themes were reviewed. During this phase, the researcher is required to specify the importance of each theme. Also, he/she must inform readers of the relevance of the themes. Additionally, the researcher is required to state how the themes fit into the 'overall story.' According to Braun and Clarke (2006, p.93), themes' names need to be evocative, concise, catchy, punchy, and informative in that they "immediately give the reader a sense of what the theme is about." The themes names were discussed with the research supervisors and peers to determine whether they were relevant, concise, and clear.

vi. Produce the report

This is the last phase of the thematic analysis process which involves the write-up of the report. Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that throughout this phase, the researcher simultaneously deals with the whole data set, the data extract focused on at any one point in time and the analytical report which is produced. This process requires the researcher to read the transcribed data several times in order to produce the report. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that the final report should contain such data extracts as interview quotes which best represent a particular theme that emerged from the analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006, p.93) point out that extracts need to be embedded within an analytic narrative that compellingly illustrates the story the researcher is telling about the data, and the analytic narrative needs to go beyond mere description of the data and make an argument in relation to the research questions. Thus, the researcher ensured that the eventual themes were clear and descriptive and that they aligned with the initial objectives of the study as described in Chapter One.

3.13 Ethical Considerations

This study was approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC). The ethical considerations in this study included:

- **Anonymity:** To protect the anonymity of the participants, their identities were substituted for pseudonyms in the analysed data and write up of the findings.
- **Non-maleficence:** There was no risk connected to this study. The researcher protected the research participants against possible harm.
- **Informed consent:** An Informed Consent Form (please refer to Appendix B) was distributed to all research participants. The Informed Consent Form described vital information relevant to research participants such as the research methods and procedures utilised in the study and the benefits of participating in the study, as well as their right to not participate.
- **Voluntary participation:** The participation was purely voluntary. No incentive was offered to the participants to induce them.
- **Plagiarism:** The secondary sources and material cited in this study were adequately and properly acknowledged and referenced to prevent plagiarism.

3.14 Research Limitations

The COVID-19 pandemic encountered in 2020 and thereafter was a major challenge for this study. During the pandemic, it was difficult for the investigator to have physical contact with the participants due to social distancing prescriptions instituted by the South African government. Furthermore, the University through which this study was conducted also prohibited such contact in an attempt to control the spread of the virus and ensure the safety of research participants. This created a considerable delay in data collection. However, post 2022, these restrictions were lifted, thus enabling data collection via focus group discussions to proceed. In addition, trying to get research participants to participate in the study was difficult due to busy personal and work schedules. However, the necessary arrangements were made to encourage the participants' involvement in the research.

3.15 Chapter Summary

Interpretivism was used as the research philosophy guiding this study. Furthermore, an exploratory design was used to explore the stakeholders' perceptions (i.e., ward committees, ward councillors and municipal senior officials) of service delivery. A qualitative research method was adopted to explain the research phenomenon adequately. Fourteen participants were purposively selected for

this study. Thematic analysis was useful in analysing the data. The following chapter presents the research findings and discussion thereof.

Chapter Four: Results and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to analyse the data and discuss the findings obtained from the study. The primary aim of data analysis is to convert the data into a form that is easy to understand (Bhatia, 2017). The data was collected from 14 participants through 5 focus-group discussions. The composition of the focus groups are as follows: Group A (2 ward committees' members), Group B (2 ward committees' members), Group C (4 ward committees), Group D (4 municipal senior officials) and Group E (1 ward councilor and 1 ward committee member). The ward committee members were the most participants in this study, while ward councillors were the least because of their availability and willingness to participate. The data collected was transcribed and analysed using NVivo. In this study, the NVivo provided a thorough interpretation of the data and enhanced data management.

Thematic analysis was further employed to identify, analyse, organise, describe, and report themes within the data set. The themes and sub-themes identified through the thematic analysis were presented using the mind map. The mind map is a valuable tool for connecting ideas. Thus, mind maps are diagrammatic representations of words, ideas, or tasks arranged around a central theme (Fearnley, 2022). The objectives that guided the investigation are:

- To identify the key stakeholders responsible for ensuring service delivery in Umzumbe Local Municipality
- To investigate the nature of services expected from the communities in the Umzumbe Local Municipality
- To determine the service delivery challenges facing Umzumbe Local Municipality
- To make recommendations to the Umzumbe Local Municipality on how to ensure effective service delivery.

4.2 Biographical Information

The biographical information of the participants, including their gender, age, race, and educational qualifications are presented below. The primary reason for including the biographical information in this study is to adequately describe the participants involved in the study.

4.2.1 Participants' gender

Figure 4.1 describes the participants' gender in the focal organisation.

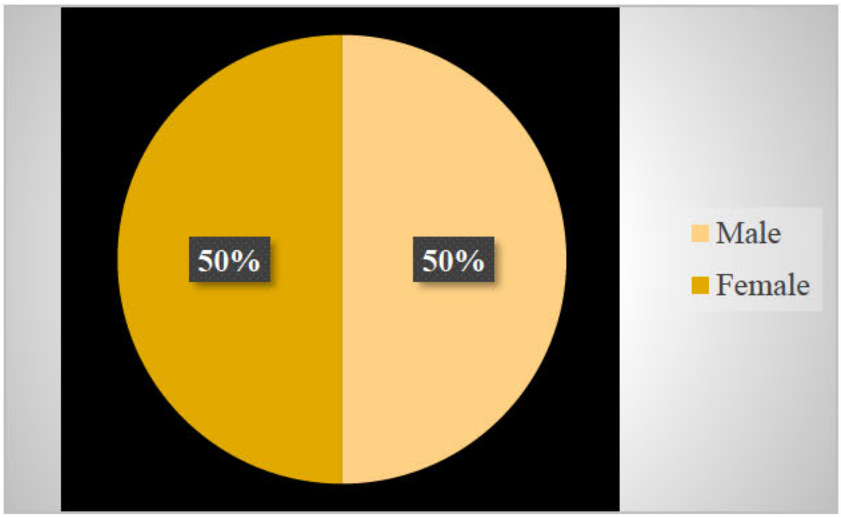

Figure 4.1: Gender of participants

Figure 4.1 shows an equal distribution regarding the gender of the research participants. Thus, 50% were males and 50% were females. The findings could be interpreted to indicate that there is a balance of genders in the municipality. Also, it could imply that both genders were presented during the time of the data collection.

4.2.2 Participants' age group

Figure 4.2 depicts the findings related to the municipality participants' age groups.

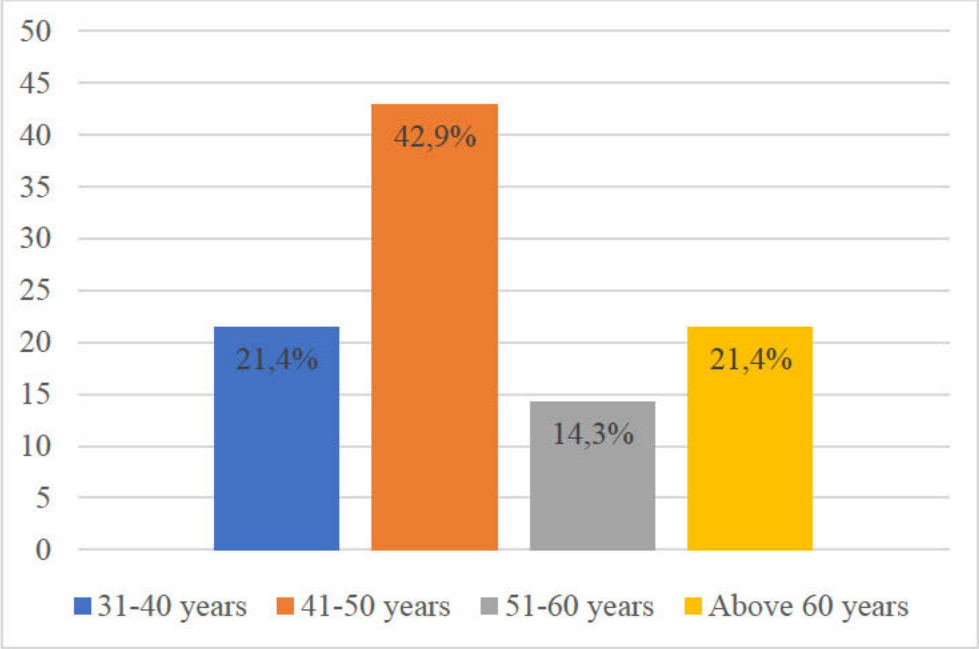

Figure 4.2 Participants' age group

As shown in Figure 4.2, 21.4% of the participants were between 31-40 years, and above 60 years of age, respectively. Also, 42.9% of the participants were between the ages of 41 and 50, while 14.3% were between 51 and 60 years of age. Therefore, it can be concluded that the municipality has a considerable number of middle-aged employees.

4.2.3 Participants' race

The findings regarding the participants' race distribution are presented in Figure 4.3.

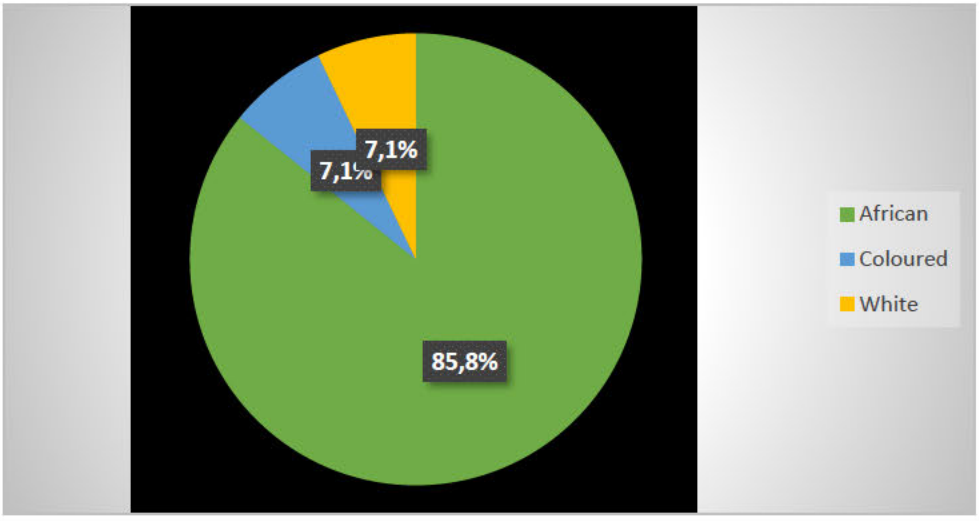

Figure 4.3 Participants' race

Figure 4.3 indicates that 7.1% of employees at the municipality were Coloured and White, respectively. However, 85.8%, which constituted the majority, were African. Given the findings, the municipality employed more Africans than people from other racial groups.

4.2.4 Participants' highest level of educational qualification

Figure 4.4 depicts the participants' highest level of educational qualification.

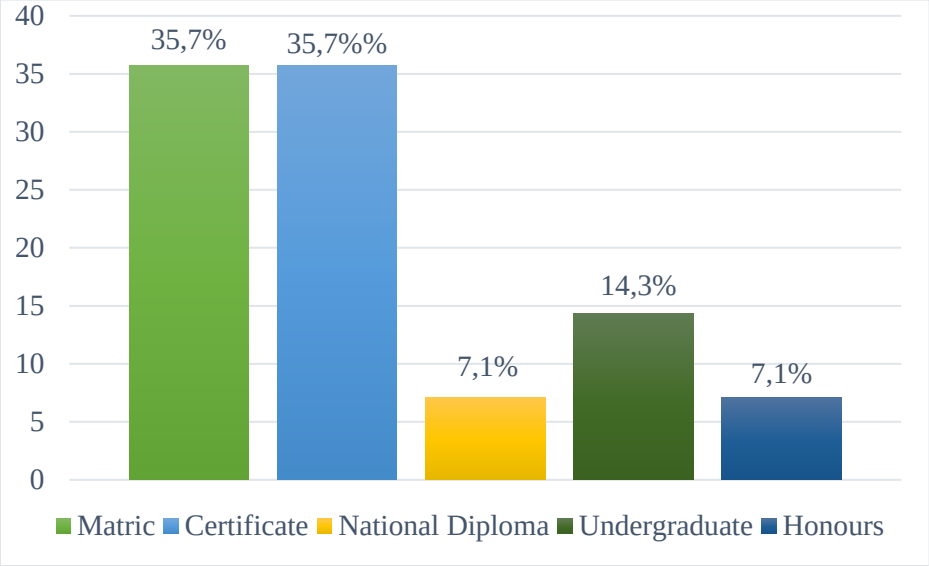

Figure 4.4 Participants' highest level of educational qualification

In Figure 4.4, 35.7% of the participants had a matric and national certificate, respectively. However, 7.1% had national diploma and honours degrees, respectively. On the other hand, 14.3% had undergraduate degrees. The data analysis suggests that the educational status of the participants in the municipality is very low. This is likely to affect service delivery in the municipality.

4.2.5 Stakeholder groups in the municipality

Figure 4.5 shows the various groups or stakeholders of the municipality involved in the study.

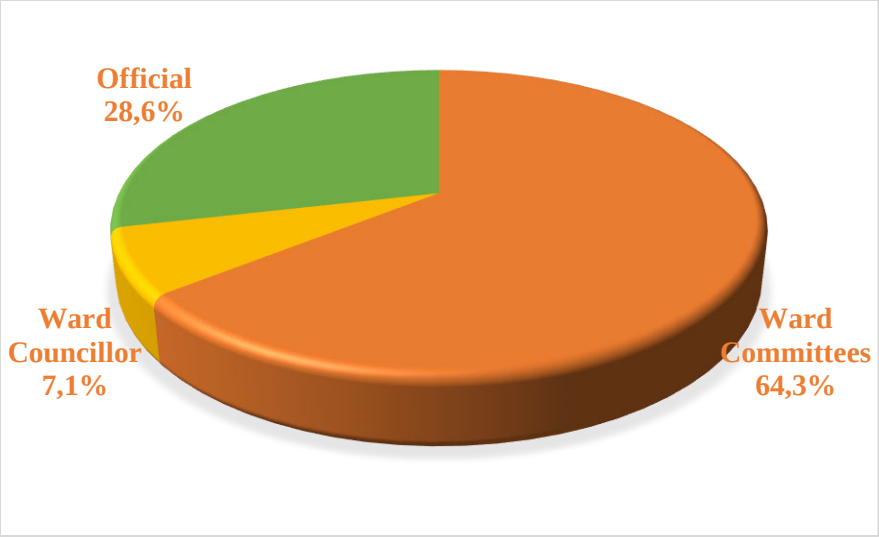

Figure 4.5: Stakeholder groups in the municipality

About 64.3% of the participants were ward committee members, 28.6% were municipal officials and 7.1% were ward councillors. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that most participants in the study were ward committee members.

The subsequent section will discuss the findings in line with the research objectives of the study outlined above.

4.3 Objective 1: Key Stakeholders and their Roles in Service Delivery

Objective 1 pertained to the key stakeholders and their roles in service delivery within the Umzumbe Local municipality. The themes that constitute the findings are presented in Figure 4.6.

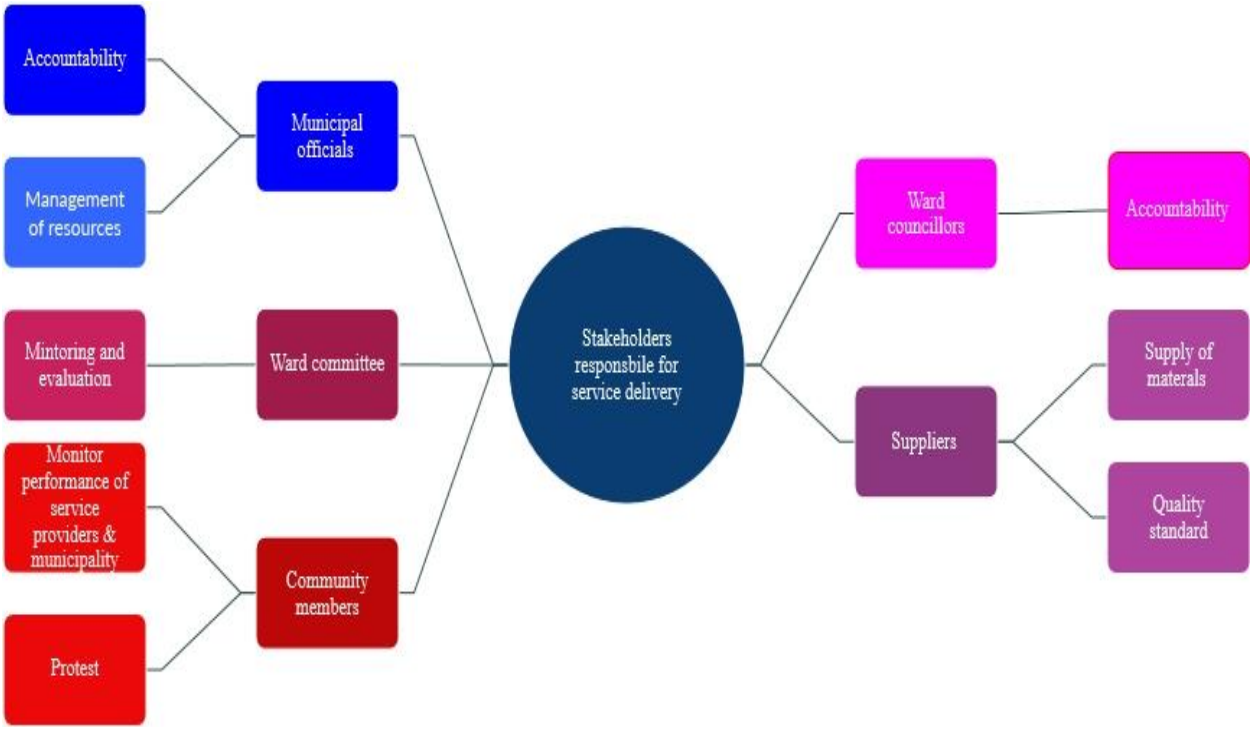

Figure 4.6 Key stakeholders and their roles in service delivery

4.3.1 Theme 1: Accountability and management of resources

The results showed that municipal officials are responsible for ensuring accountability and managing resources in the municipality. In South Africa, municipal officials, including managers, are appointed under Section 57(6) of the MSA 32 of 2000 (Masuku & Jili, 2019). Also, the Act provides that the appointment of municipal council, officials and political executives should not exceed one year. The findings revealed that municipal officials, including managers, deputies and political executives, constituted the key stakeholders in service delivery in the municipality.

All participants (N = 14) believed that although the municipal officials are responsible for ensuring accountability and managing resources, they could not perform these functions effectively. This suggests that there were mixed reactions and feelings among the participants regarding the role of municipal officials in service delivery. Thus, while some participants argued that the municipal officials ensured accountability for the resources received, others indicated that they were not accountable. Furthermore, while most participants believed that municipal officials managed the resources received judiciously, others said they did not. The participants' voices that support the findings are:

"What I understand is that the funds given to the municipal officials to be utilized must be accounted for, which I do feel that they do account for. My view is that they use the money in the areas that are applicable to complete a specific project, like your parking place or fixing potholes. The funds are utilised accordingly. Some officials and councillors always refer to their party mandates when they carry out their duties. Managers and municipal officials allow stakeholders to contribute with inputs during service provision, especially in new projects and when changes are needed" (Focus group 1 – ward committees).

"As municipal officials, we are expected to utilise the grants/funds allocated to us and report on how we use the funds. Suppose we receive grants and we are not spending them according to the requirements. In that case, the custodian or organisation giving that particular grant will reduce the grant because it looks like the municipality does not need the grant, and at the same time, we have a huge backlog. Therefore, municipal officials are responsible for ensuring accountability for how the funds are utilised" (Focus group 2 - ward committees).

"*Yes and no. Yes, because the officials are responsible for ensuring the grants received are accounted for. However, due to corruption, most of them avoid the responsibility of accountable governance. You will see that even though the Constitution Act 108 of 1996, Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000, and other Acts provide that municipal officials should ensure accountability, most of them have failed*" (Focus group C – ward committees).

"I want to emphasize that although accounting officials and municipal managers are entrusted to manage municipal assets, income and expenditure, they are not living up to expectations. The municipal resources are not used wisely, and that is when we kept having service delivery problems and backlogs. People must learn to do the right thing. We cannot keep failing our people because someone else has failed to do his/her job" (Focus group D – municipal senior officials).

From the focus-group discussions, it is very clear that municipal officials play a pivotal role in service delivery in their municipality. These findings are supported by existing legislations and studies. 71(1) of the Act promotes accountability by holding the government and public officials accountable for their actions (MFMA, 2003). Moreover, the white paper on transforming public service delivery of 1997 requires public officials to strive toward professional ethics when

performing their responsibilities (DPSA, 2022). Besides, Section 195 of the Constitution requires public servants to act honestly in their dealings with the public and clients (Jarbandhan, 2022). Therefore, from the constitutional point of view, municipal officials are mandated to ensure accountable governance and to manage scarce resources effectively and efficiently, thus ensuring quality service delivery.

Masuku and Jili (2019) claim that municipal managers are expected to inspire employees by being accountable and responsive to the oversight role, which leads to service delivery. The municipal officials are required to account not only to their superiors but also to the public. They must report on how they manage the municipal resources and how they have been responsive to the public on whether they have achieved their intended objectives (Zwane & Matsiliza, 2022).

4.3.2 Theme 2: Monitoring and evaluating municipal projects

Besides the municipal officials, the study found that ward committees are responsible for playing a bigger role in service delivery. In the localised sphere of government, ward committees are seen as the link between councillors and the community. All participants shared the common view that ward committees are involved in service delivery through monitoring and evaluating such service delivery. The findings showed that ward committees are accountable to the community that elected them. The role of the ward committee toward service delivery includes participating in plans and programmes of municipalities, facilitating stakeholder participation in all affairs of the municipality and monitoring and evaluating service delivery. The following quotes support the findings:

> "*The ward committee is responsible for making representations and recommendations on local government matters to their constituents. It acts as the liaison between the municipality and the community through the ward councillor. The committee also monitors and evaluates municipal projects in the ward. We can also say that the ward committee holds the ward councillor accountable for the service delivery mandates"* (Focus group A – ward committees).

> *"One must understand that the community elects the ward committee to represent their interests. The members of this group are expected to meet regularly to make decisions that will benefit the community members. Yes, the ward committee must work in the interest of the community but not the government. So, therefore, the presence of these people in the*

municipality is crucial to ensure better services are delivered to their people. They are to hold the local government accountable for service delivery" (Focus group D – municipal senior officials).

"Yes, the ward committee matters when it comes to service delivery in the municipality. These people are elected into office to ensure that their people benefit from quality service delivery. Their oversight responsibilities include monitoring and evaluating municipality projects and service providers. They also demand accountability from the municipality and municipal council about how funds are used. So, we cannot say that ward committees are not important in the functioning of a municipality. The service delivery chain will collapse if ward committees are not elected" (Focus group E – ward councilor and committee).

To promote democratic governance, the ward committee system was introduced in December 2000, per sections 72-78 of the MSA of 1998 (Thornhill & Madumo, 2011). The primary object for creating this committee is to improve service delivery in local communities. Ward committees are seen as the mechanisms through which all stakeholders at ward level can contribute and effectively debate on the matters of the municipality. They play a critical role in encouraging and formulating interventions to promote public engagement and participation (Thornhill & Madumo, 2011). This public participation in decision-making promotes quality service delivery in local governments. Although ward committees face several challenges, they encourage and formulate programmes to promote public participation (Thornhill & Madumo, 2011).

Mtshali (2016) believes that ward committees are a good consultative vehicle to channel information to the community. They establish new partnerships with various people and organisations to bring changes to the local communities through lobbying and decision-making. Sibiya (2016) argues that ward committees are responsible for promoting participatory democracy in local municipalities, for which they are given powers. Nomdo et al. (2019) acknowledge that ward committees focus on aligning government policy from the national to the local level by transmitting this to civil society, where their interests and objectives are defined. Zulu (2020) points out that ward committees were established to promote effective community participation with the support of provincial government departments.

4.3.3 Theme 3: Monitoring performance and protests

In addition to the above, the study further established that community members played a crucial role in service delivery within the Umzumbe Local Municipality. The study findings revealed that the community members are responsible for monitoring the performance of service providers and municipality. In addition, they engage protests to express their dissatisfaction. The participants argued that the community members and interest groups are involved in the municipal service delivery processes. These people express what their needs are through dialogue and protest actions. The quotes that support the findings are.

> *"Yes, the interest groups are part of the service delivery process in the municipality. For instance, at your ward committee meeting are your normal community members and the industries who are part of the community. These people express what their needs are through dialogue and protest. I know that at your IDPs, the majority of these people are in the industries"* (Focus group A- ward committees).

> *"Yes, the interest groups are part of the service delivery processes. Firstly, from the word go, when the project has been introduced, the municipality informs the community about the project. We have a forum where community members voice their frustrations and challenges. The municipality has to address such challenges. For instance, IDPs are tailored to address the concerns of the community members. The municipal development plan guides the municipality about what service delivery is required"* (Focus group B – ward committees).

> *"Yes, there is an improvement in involving the community in the service delivery process. For example, in our case, we created communication mechanisms to communicate with the community. For example, about water scarcity, we communicate to say that today we are getting a truck of water in this place, tomorrow in another area. Today, we will be closing this reservoir or putting water in this reservoir. Because when we came in, people did not have water for about fifteen years. But a month after the election, we came up with a strategy for people to get water. Some people were getting water twice a week or weekly. I came up with such a plan. As a councillor, it is helping me because I am part of the executive because I engage the municipality to provide service to the community. This*

particular, I have done, for instance, three roads within the municipality" (Focus group C-ward committees).

According to Ng and Rahman (2021), stakeholders use their knowledge and experience to participate in planning and development processes, which promote long-term community involvement and development in communities. From participatory democracy and constitutional standpoints, community members, as part of stakeholders, play a decisive role in service delivery worldwide (Zwane & Matsiliza, 2022).

Recently, there exists a paradigm shift in planning for service delivery from a centralized system to a more decentralised system. Thus, planning is seen as an inclusive approach in which community members are involved in service delivery issues. It has been found that communities are becoming more demanding, requiring engagement (Christensen, 2018). Therefore, community participation is seen as a mechanism for improving service delivery. Community participation promotes transparency and accountability in governance as well as creating ownership of development decisions (Bakre & Dorasamy, 2018). It is suggested that community members play vital role in service delivery through the provision of input-related matters (Maemu, 2021).

On the contrary, Zwane and Matsiliza (2022) argue that various gaps exist in decision-making and service delivery because of a lack of community involvement in resource planning and participatory budgeting. Therefore, Mwankupili and Msilu (2020) postulate that to improve service quality, local governments must engage their constituents in service delivery affairs.

4.3.4 Theme 4: Create conducive environment and ensure accountability

The findings also suggested that ward councillors played an essential role in ensuring service delivery within the municipality. The participants argued that ward councillors and other leaders provide a conducive environment for service delivery to thrive. Also, the findings revealed that the ward councillors are responsible for ensuring accountability within the municipality. Nonetheless, most participants argued that the involvement and interference of ward councillors in municipal matters had affected service delivery. According to the participants, councillors changed their mindsets and attitudes as soon as they are elected and distanced themselves from their constituencies. They argued that because ward councillors are expected to attend political activities and meetings, they do not have enough time to serve the constituencies and address basic needs. The following are some quotes from the focus-group discussions that support these findings.

"Yes, Ward councillors and other leaders provide a conducive environment for service delivery to thrive. However, because of their political activities, they do not have enough time to serve the constituencies and address basic needs. Some of them, too, have changed their mindset as soon as they get elected" (Focus group A- ward committees).

"This is a fact. Some officials and councillors often refer to their party manifesto when performing their duties. This is not a good practice because we do not have people from only one political party working here in this municipality. We know that during public participation, it is impossible to separate politics because most office-bearers would want to hold on to the interests of their political parties. This political inference would affect service delivery badly because people from other political parties are more likely to sabotage them" (Focus group D – municipal senior officials).

Section 152 (1) of the Constitution outlines the objectives of local government towards ensuring accountability, provision of public services, and socio-economic development. Also, Section 4 (2) of the MSA of 1998 is equally important in outlining the role of ward councillors in public service delivery. Thus, Section 4 (2) of the Act provides the role of the municipal council to ensure that the financial resources of the municipality are administered in a way that promotes efficient service delivery (Khomo et al., 2023).

In South Africa, councillors are expected to participate in decision-making toward public service delivery. Studies (Farisani, 2022; Schoeman & Chakwizira, 2023) reveal that councillors are primary role players in the governance system and service delivery. Likewise, other researchers (D'Inverno, et al., 2023; Shava & Mazenda, 2021) concur that the legislative roles of councillors include providing effective services and sustainability of local livelihoods. Naidoo and Rampal (2019) suggest that municipalities can adapt to changing environments while being supported by ward councillors in processes, including the IDP and local economic development (LED).

4.3.5 Theme 5: Supply materials and meet quality standards

The study discovered that suppliers were pivotal in service delivery in South African municipalities. However, there were mixed reactions among the participants about the timely supply of materials and goods and the meeting of quality standards. While some participants argued that the suppliers supplied the materials and goods to the municipality on time, some argued that they sometimes failed. For instance, some participants expressed that only 80% of the

suppliers deliver the materials and goods on time. Furthermore, the participants shared the view that, at times, the materials and goods supplied by the suppliers do not meet quality standards, resulting in service delivery protests. The voices from the focus-group discussions that affirm the findings are.

> "*I will say 80% of the supplier's supply materials and goods on time to the municipality. Sometimes, some specific types of materials bought internationally might be delayed. I agree with my colleague. There are some instances where they might place orders for materials abroad. Sometimes, unplanned materials might affect service delivery because the suppliers might not have the items. Not always there is a value for money. In our processes, they always tell you to choose the cheapest quote. Sometimes, the cheapest is the best option. So, I think this is where the problem could be. The element of corruption is a contributing factor to poor quality standards. You cannot stop corruption entirely. But I think if you want to be corrupt, take your 10% and give 90% to the community"* (Focus group A- ward committees).

> "*Yes or no. I want to start with no. Often, most service providers do not meet the standard because the municipality has engineers, but the work they outsource to the service providers is where the collapse is. Mafias run most engineering industries. I will make an example. Not everyone can wake up and establish a company. You need to register with the board. But with engineering, anyone can wake up and register a company with CIBD. And this person will not even have a Matric or standard 10. This is where the collapse is. How can someone with educational qualifications deliver up to the quality standard? They can say they are recruiting professional people on paper, but when you google their sites, such does not exist"* (Focus group C – ward committees).

Despite the mixed findings, suppliers play crucial role in service delivery in the municipality. Previous research also supports these findings, which state that suppliers are one of the most important stakeholders in service delivery (Lowasikou & Iravo, 2016). For example, most municipalities use a greater proportion of their resources to procure raw materials and equipment from suppliers to achieve the developmental needs of the community (Tshilo & van Niekerk, 2016). According to Tshilo and van Niekerk (2016), post-1994, local governments have been responsible for implementing the supply-chain-management system to manage infrastructure.

4.4 Research Objective 2: The Nature of Service Expected

Research Objective 2 examined the nature of service the community expected from the municipality. The findings revealed that the community expected the municipality to provide accessible, affordable, sustainable and quality services. The themes that form the basis of these findings are presented in Figure 4.7.

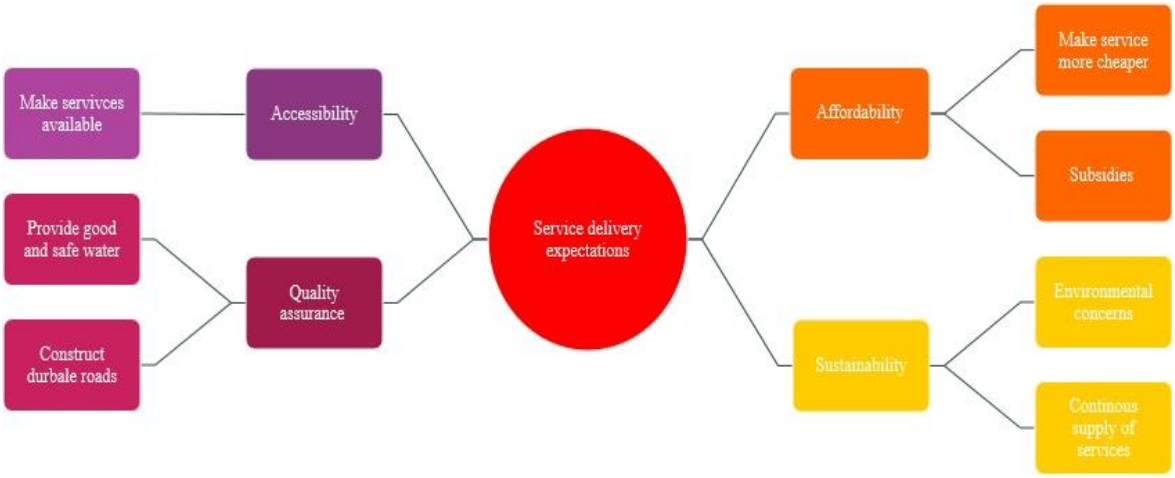

Figure 4.7 Themes related to the nature of service expected

4.4.1 Theme 1: Accessible services

According to the white paper (1998), one of the principles that should guide local government in providing basic services is accessibility. The white paper requires councillors to provide access to essential services. Based on this constitutional right, many communities demand that their municipalities provide accessible services, especially to the deprived areas. The study found that the communities within the Umzumbe Local Municipality always demand accessible services such as water, electricity and roads. However, some participants argued that people demand accessible services but are not willing to pay for such services. The quotes that support these findings are presented below.

> *"Yes, they demand accessible services like accessing water. Yes, they do have the right to accessible water. We spend time educating them about water. They feel it is their right to have it, even if they don't pay for it. But I sometimes feel like educating them is the best. You need to pay for services to get to you; it is not about a matter of right. A lot of people*

*feel that is a priority and they must have it. People demand for services without wanting to pay for them. What I will say is about our mindsets or mentality. The only way to ensure accessible services is to ensure that people must be made to pay for them" (*Focus group A – ward committees).

"Yes, they demand accessible services because some do not have water. Most of our services are inaccessible because we have a huge backlog. As a municipality, we have some interim measures. For example, we work closely with the community by meeting with ward councillors, who then give us all the required services in their ward and make necessary arrangements when we know what to do. If it is about water, we get water tankers to deliver water daily or weekly. If it is about tard roads, we give them gravel roads while we plan and source the budget" (Focus group B – ward committees).

From the above discussion, it can be argued that the community expects the municipality to provide accessible services. The findings are consistent with the provisions of the relevant legislation. The white paper requires councillors to improve access to essential services (Zondi et al., 2017). Also, the MSA provides that service delivery be equitable and accessible. Mutiganda et al. (2023) argue that accessibility is a relevant component of service delivery that shapes and influences policy-making process. However, Mutyambizi et al. (2020) discovered that most participants expressed dissatisfaction with service delivery. Mutyambizi et al. (2020) establish that about 52% of the participants in their study did not have access to electricity. On the contrary, Mengste et al. (2020) find moderate customer satisfaction with service delivery in public-service organisations.

4.4.2 Theme 2: Affordable service

In addition, the study found that the municipal community demanded affordable services. According to the participants, the community members demanded that they pay barely the minimal cost for services rendered by the municipality. The participants contended that the community always wants the municipality to make services cheaper. Also, the participants believed that the community wanted the municipality to subsidize the costs associated with the basic services to enable them to afford them. The participants' voices that support these findings are presented below.

"*Yes, the community is often demanded for affordable service. The only way to solve this problem is for the government to subsidize these services"* (Focus group A – ward committees).

"Yes, they demand affordable services. In terms of water, they demand barely a minimum cost. They are looking for a few meters of water. In our indigenous community, we offer them support. For instance, if they can afford more than our basic water, they are accommodated to come and apply for metering" (Focus group B – ward committees).

"Of course, they want affordable services. These people are looking for something that they can afford. You know the situation we find ourselves in. The economy is not doing well, hence, customers are more interested in services that they can afford with the little they have. The majority of our people are poor and cannot afford anything above their budgets. This is the reason for many protests in the municipality" (Focus group D – municipal senior officials).

These findings are also supported by evidence from empirical research (Mutiganda et al., 2023). The white paper suggests that service be affordable to all citizens (Zondi et al., 2017).

4.4.3 Theme 3: Quality service

In recent times, the demand for quality service has continued to increase. This study confirmed that the community members expected the municipality to supply quality services to improve their livelihood. The participants argued that the community has the right to demand quality services, and the municipality must acknowledge such rights. The following are some quotes from the focus-group discussions affirming the findings.

"It is their right that the municipality must provide quality services. It is a must. You must go for a quality approach even if you are doing your gravel road or upgrading your road. You must do it properly. One thing the municipality does is the procurement of the service providers as per the budget. The idea of looking for the cheapest service providers is killing most municipalities. Municipalities must find alternative ways of doing their jobs without service providers. The municipality must procure its materials and employ people to do the work in-house. This approach can help municipalities to save so much. Even if you can

employ people for three years, you create more jobs and save costs. I think quality can be provided through insourcing" (Focus group B – ward committees).

"Of course, these people are always protesting for quality services. They think it is their right to receive quality services. This pressure is also good for the municipality because they will live up to their responsibility. How will you feel if the services you receive do not meet the standard? The municipality has a duty to ensure that quality standards are met. In doing so, we are improving lives" (Focus groups E – ward councilor and ward committee).

Romero-Subia et al. (2022) point out that recently, there is a growing demand for quality services, because it is believed that quality service results in customer satisfaction. Romero-Subia et al. (2022) announce that quality service is the new component of service delivery that has drawn the attention of many scholars. Given this, many governance reforms aim to improve service quality (Zarychta, 2020). Service quality represents a fundamental element of measuring government performance (Biswas & Roy, 2020), forcing many local governments to adopt best approaches to ensure that services offered to citizens meets the quality standard (Filippetti, 2020). For this reason, the white paper of 1998 expects South African municipalities to deliver quality service to their constituents. Zondi et al. (2017) postulate that, although most municipalities struggle to provide quality service, the white paper highlights certain criteria for ensuring service quality, including suitability, time frames, convenience and responsiveness to the end users.

4.4.4 Theme 4: Sustainable service

Besides the above, the study revealed that the community members often demanded that the municipality provide sustainable services. Most community members are more concerned about the environmental impact of the services provided by the municipality. According to the participants, the community members want the municipality to adopt sustainability to ensure efficient use of resources without compromising the future generation. The following quotes from the focus-group discussion give credence to the research findings.

"The Constitution provides for the devolution of power to the local government. Therefore, municipalities are supported by the national government through various grants to ensure that sustainable services are provided to their communities. Municipalities are established to develop communities in their areas of jurisdiction. Hence, municipalities are required

to adopt sustainability by using resources without compromising the future generation. Against this background, the community often expects the municipality to provide sustainable services without compromising the environment and putting lives at risk. To ensure sustainable service delivery, regular maintenance must be carried out. We need to maintain our infrastructure. Yes, the city grows and demand will get higher. But if your infrastructure can deliver such services, you can meet this demand. For instance, do we have big enough pipes for water to these extended areas? Do we have proper electrical cables to ensure that we always have electricity? Because if we do not maintain our substations, you cannot meet the demand" (Focus group A – ward committees).

"There are many factors that come with providing sustainable services like water and electricity to the community. We have something like assessment management. This involves your maintenance plan. The municipality does not carry out preventative maintenance because of a shortage of resources, including manpower, vehicles, flights, etc. Flight is a big problem because of drivers' behaviours" (Focus group D – municipal senior officials).

The white paper recommends that municipalities provide sustainable services to their community. Bazaanah and Mothapo (2023) state that providing sustainable service became the primary responsibility of local governments after the democratic elections. Patience and Nel (2021) consider that, although most local governments are doing well regarding service delivery, they face several impediments in providing sustainable service that will translate into economic growth and development.

Tapela (2018) argues that providing sustainable services, especially water and sanitation in rural municipalities, remains a critical challenge in South Africa. Ditshego (2022) asserts that the growing population and job losses have increased the dependency and demand for services, leading to service protests due to limited service delivery. Because of this, most municipalities struggle to offer sustainable services to their communities.

4.5 Research Objective 3: Service Delivery Challenges in the Municipality

Research Objective 3 analysed the service delivery challenges in the municipality. The study identified the challenges that hampered service delivery in the municipality. The themes identified

are budget/funding, capacity/staff shortage, lack of accountability, corruption, political deployment and political coalitions. Figure 4.8 shows the themes related to the findings.

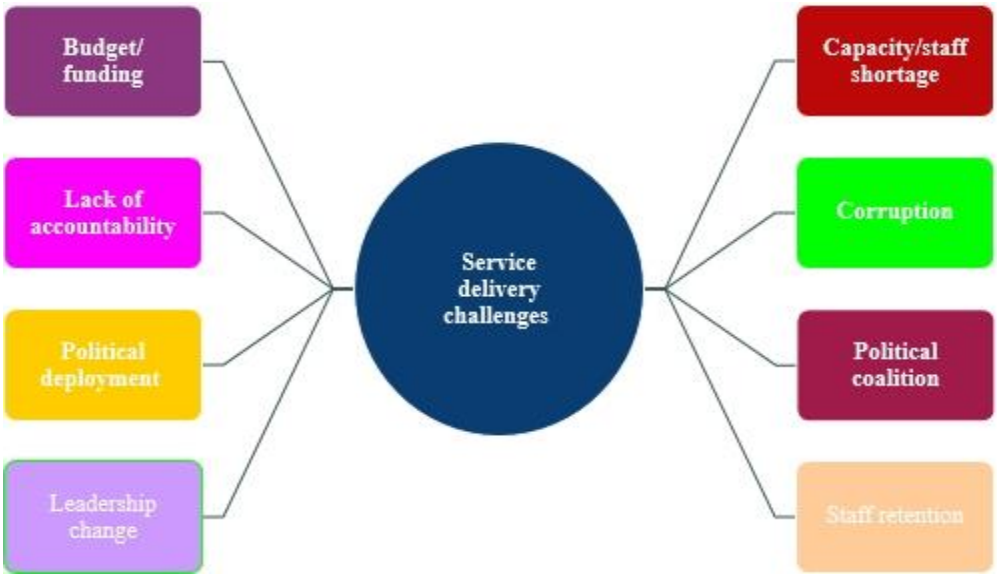

Figure 4.8 Themes related to service delivery challenges in the municipality

4.5.1 Theme 1: Budget/funding

Budget allocation or source of funding remains a critical issue affecting service delivery worldwide. The results of this study confirmed that lack of funding negatively impacted municipal service delivery. Most participants expressed that the municipality does not have adequate budget allocation to fund its projects. The following are some participants voices that support the findings.

> *"The budget cut is the major challenge facing municipalities. They expect us to do the job, but we are not getting the money. We are not getting the revenue because people are not paying for the services"* (Focus group A – ward committees).

> *"We are providing services to the communities. Money is not enough, and we have a backlog. We have an aging infrastructure. In fact, the allocation of the municipal budget is not enough. We have aging infrastructure that is on the ground, and at the same time, we have increasing water challenges. The demand for services is growing, which requires money. The money we have is not enough to cover some areas"* (Focus group A – ward committees).

The above findings are also supported by previous studies. Salaam (2018) asserts that unsatisfactory service delivery in municipalities can be linked to a lack of funds. Magagula (2018) maintains that most district municipalities have limited access to revenue compared with the local municipalities. Masegare and Ngoepe (2018) concur that many local municipalities face budget under-spending, affecting community service delivery. Burger and Calitz (2021) acknowledge that the national treasury has cut down the government budget in South Africa due to COVID-19. Moreover, Kalonda and Govender (2021) highlight that financial difficulties contribute to poor service delivery in Katima Mulilo Town Council, Namibia. Similarly, Zerihun and Mashigo (2022) found that the district municipality in Mpumalanga has limited access to finance to provide basic services to the community.

4.5.2 Theme 2: Lack of accountability

The Constitution and other legal frameworks require municipal officials to ensure accountable governance and to manage scarce resources effectively and efficiently thus ensuring quality service delivery. Unfortunately, this study discovered that lack of accountability remains a key challenge affecting service delivery in the Umzumbe Local Municipality. The participants argued that because most vehicles and assets do not belong to the drivers and other officials, these personnel driving the vehicles or handling the assets failed to be accountable. They believed that officials were not accountable for their stewardship. The following quotes stemmed from the focus-group discussion.

> *"Because some vehicles do not belong to the drivers, there is a lack of accountability. There is a lack of checks and balances in the municipality. There is nothing like ownership in the organisation"* (Focus group A – ward committees).

> *"Another thing I want to say is that there is a lack of accountability among the officials in this municipality. People do the wrong thing and get away with it. The systems in place are weak to hold people accountable for their actions and inactions. This affects service delivery because people think they can do anything without consequence"* (Focus group D – municipal senior officials).

The above findings also conformed to existing studies. It has been argued that lack of accountability and democracy over the past twenty-six years has created a barrier between the citizens and politicians elected to facilitate service delivery in their respective wards

(Muchadenyika, 2017). The continued outcry has led to several violent protests that have threatened the lives of the councillors, properties belonging to politicians having been torched in several areas. The auditor-general's report for the 2018/19 financial year painted an undesirable picture of billions of rand wasted at the hands of public officials. The auditor-general further expressed his dismay at the failures and actions that are contrary to the prescripts and recognized accounting disciplines. These administrative and governance lapses have promoted weaker accountability measures, and consequently exposure to abuse of the public purse (AG 2018/19).

4.5.3 Theme 3: Political deployment

Globally, political deployment constitutes a key barrier to service delivery. The findings in this study paint a gloomy picture for South African municipalities. The participants expressed that political deployment stifled quality service delivery in the Umzumbe Local Municipality. Participants argued that because of political deployment, incompetent officials are appointed to senior management positions in the municipality, resulting in service delivery failures. Thus, people are appointed based on political influence and party affiliation. The participants' voices that support the research findings are stated below.

> ***"****Appointments are based on political influence and party affiliation. There is a total disregard for employment regulations or recruitment laws and policies. Senior managers are not appointed to manage the positions. Political deployment does not always affect service delivery, but if you want to employ someone, at least ensure that the person knows how to do the job. Do not just bring in someone for the sake of it. Yes, I agree. You can always learn as well. So, if they are able and willing to learn, it would not affect them, but sometimes they are appointed into positions they cannot manage. Political deployment is both good and bad. It is 50/50. Sometimes, people come with the attitude of not wanting to learn"* (Focus group A – ward committees).

> *"One cannot discuss the service delivery challenges without mentioning the political deployment. We are all in this mess because of the so called "cadre or political deployment". How can a ruling party appoint people based on familiarity and party affiliation? We are saying that appointments should not be limited to only party members. When you do this, you may not find competent people to do the job. The problem is getting out of hand because of the cadre appointment policy"* (Focus group C – ward committees).

It is clear that political deployment affected service delivery in the municipality. Salaam (2018) finds that a contributing factor to poor service delivery is political interference in local government affairs. This is a very sensitive area for local municipalities, political appointments emanating from cadre deployment. Salaam (2018) argues political parties employ people who understand the vision and strategy framework which is the manifesto used during the party election campaign. There are good and bad sides of political deployment: the bad relates to leniency on consequence management and poor or lack of oversight from the politicians, as they will protect one of their own. It becomes problematic when cadre deployment promotes anarchy and incompetence, such as instances in which deployees are placed into positions which they are not qualified for. Such could lead to for example, the lack of capacity to prepare financial statements and reports as noted by the auditor-general report for the 18/19 financial year (Kroukamp & Cloete, 2018).

4.5.4 Theme 4: Capacity or skills shortage

In addition to the above, the study observed that lack of capacity was a key challenge for service delivery failures and protests in municipality. The participants agreed that the South African public sector, including municipalities, is experiencing a shortage of critical skills. According to them, most municipalities do not have skilled people and technocrats to ensure undisrupted service delivery. The situation keeps worsening, resulting in many service delivery protests. The participants' voices are presented below.

> *"I think because of the political influence and deployment, qualified people, like senior managers, are not appointed to run municipal affairs. Wrong people are placed in the wrong positions"* (Focus group A – ward committees).

> *"We already spoke about it. For example, if you take someone who is not qualified to do the job and you put them in positions, they will delay processes; they don't know what they are doing, they are just in the position"* (Focus group B – ward committees).

It is an undeniable fact that most local government lacks the capacity to provide basic services (Kroukamp, 2016). Ramutsheli and Van Rensburg (2015) point out that local governments fail to achieve their objectives due to inadequate human capacity and a shortage of skills. Kalonda and Govender (2021) believe that although municipalities strive to provide basic services, they lack skilled professionals and workers to deliver their mandates. The Institute for Democratic Alternatives in South Africa (2019) reported that most public sector appointees lack the skills and

knowledge to function well. Furthermore, Mabizela and Matsiliza (2020) point out that the shortage of technical and managerial skills in most municipalities contributes to poor service delivery.

4.5.5 Theme 5: Corruption

South African municipalities have come under the spotlight for some time now due to the increasing rate of corrupt activities. The findings are not far from the reality. All the participants agreed that corruption remains a crucial challenge affecting service delivery in the municipality. They believed that money meant for municipal projects was diverted into private pockets. Participants argued that corruption is rising due to poor control mechanisms and lack of political will. The participants' voices from the focus-group discussions are presented as follows.

> *"Corruption is a big challenge because it is one of the reasons why we do not have enough budget. Because of corruption, about 20% of the budget goes to private pockets. So, it does affect service delivery"* (Focus group C – ward committees).

> *"Yes, corruption affects service delivery. For example, the delay in paying service providers, as you mentioned, can affect service delivery. When corruption is involved, certain percentages of money are exchanged among the service providers and politicians. The mechanisms in place to expose corruption, for example, whistleblowers, do not work. If you are a whistleblower, they will take you to court, and no one will protect you. For example, the tender contract is R10 million and R2 million goes missing. It means that the community that needs certain services will be deprived"* (Focus group 5 – ward councillor).

These findings echo what previous researchers have reported. Corruption remains a critical challenge confronting South Africa. This challenge affects not only this country, but the quality of service delivery in most municipalities. Sebola (2015) claims that corruption is the dominant challenge facing most countries, including South Africa. Also, Mbandlwa et al. (2020) finds that inadequate mechanisms for fighting corruption compromise public service delivery. Furthermore, Mabeba (2021) confirms that corruption remains the leading factor to account for service delivery protests.

4.5.6 Theme 6: Political coalition

The study found that a political coalition or coalition government contributes to improved service delivery. The participants believed that political coalition does not affect service delivery, but it works better because of the agreements entered into by the political parties. Participants opined that this approach to governance reduces political dominance, leading to improved service delivery. The following are some quotes from the focus-group discussions that give credence to the findings.

> *"Political coalition does not affect service delivery. It works better. The form of governance reduces political dominance in a particular area or municipality, which can result in improved service delivery"* (Focus group B – ward committees).

> *"Unfortunately, no. A political coalition may not affect service delivery if principles and regulations guide it. This system of governance instead benefits the community because corrupt officials are often weeded out. One party cannot have its way out. You will need approval from other political parties before you can do something. In this way, service delivery can be improved"* (Focus group C – ward committees).

Masiya et al. (2019) believe that political coalitions have impacted municipal functionality, leading to citizens' dissatisfaction with service delivery. In Indonesia, a study by Lewis and Hendrawan (2019) finds that coalition governments reduce budget fraud in local government. On the other hand, Joshua et al. (2022) confirm that the differing party policy agendas and principles hamper the delivery of service.

4.5.7 Theme 7: Staff retention

Globally, many organisations, including those of public service, face challenges in retaining their workforce. The findings in this study are not far from this reality. It is discovered that Umzumbe Local Municipality faced a significant challenge in retaining its employees, leading to poor service delivery. The participants argued that Umzumbe Local Municipality is struggling with service delivery due to the inability to retain competent personnel. The following voices support the research findings:

"One of the problems is the difficulty in retaining more competent people. The municipality is unattractive to skilled people for several reasons, such as low compensation and political interference" (Focus group D – municipal senior officials).

"Another challenge is staff retention. If you don't retain your staff, there is some information that you will lack. When you come in, you learn something as the year progresses. When the five years come to an end already, you come up with so many plans about how to fix the problems, and then the election comes, you are gone. And the next person must start again" (Focus group B– ward committees).

The findings reported in the study are also supported by previous research. Kalonda and Govender (2021) believe that although municipalities strive to provide basic service, they lack skilled professionals and workers to deliver their mandates. According to Thusi and Chauke (2023), the public service faces a challenge in retaining scarce skills to compete in the competitive business environment. Thusi and Chauke (2023) argue that the challenge of retaining skilled workers is affecting service delivery and is a costly intervention for the South African government. Thusi and Chauke (2023) establish that the challenges affecting employee retention the public service include unfavourable working conditions and unattractive competitive packages.

4.5.8 Theme 8: Leadership changes

The study revealed that leadership changes were the biggest challenge affecting service delivery in the Umzumbe Local Municipality. The participants argued that the frequent changes in the leadership within the municipality are detrimental to the efforts toward service delivery. Participants opined that people hold on to vital information anytime there is a change in leadership because they do not know their future in the municipality. Some of the quotes that emerged from the focus-group discussion were as follows:

"Changes in leadership within the municipality also affect service delivery. The policy-makers who decide how many years people should spend in certain offices have it wrong because the new people will have to reinvent the wheel" (Focus group A – ward committees).

"Another problem is the constant changes in political leadership in the municipality. This change disrupts the effort toward service delivery in the Umzumbe Local Municipality" (Focus group E – ward councilor and committee).

Ndevu and Muller (2017) observed that most leaders in South African municipalities are politically appointed, affecting quality service delivery. Mbandlwa et al. (2020) confirm that local governments have experienced leadership challenges, which have major implications on municipal service delivery. Another study (Kalonda & Govender, 2021) concurs that lack of quality service delivery in local government could be linked to leadership challenges. Mbandlwa et al. (2020) suggest that a lack of leadership ethics has resulted in several leadership challenges, which have compromised public service delivery.

4.6 Research Objective 4: Recommendations to Improve Service Quality

Research Objective 4 explored strategies and recommendations to enhance service quality in the Umzumbe Local Municipality. From the focus-group discussions, the study identified some recommendations for improving service quality, including appointing competent people, customer care, political will, training of municipal officials, monitoring, communication, teamwork, and avoidance of political interference. The themes are depicted in Figure 4.9.

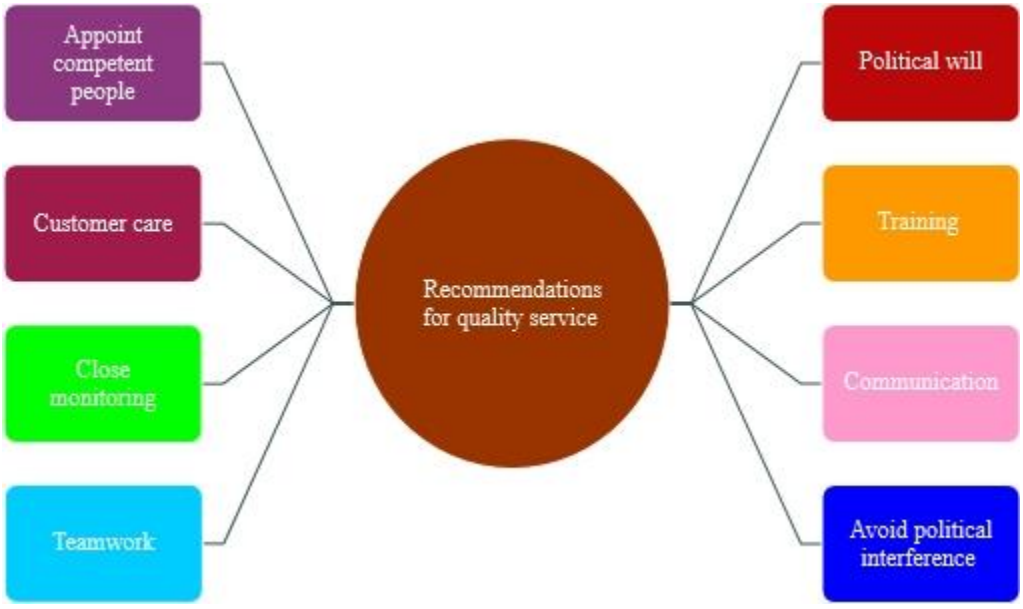

Figure 4.9 Themes related to recommendations to improve service quality

4.6.1 Theme 1: Appointing competent staff

It is suggested that the municipality appoint competent people to manage service delivery. The participants argued that political parties avoid appointing competent people based on party affiliation. According to them, only people with the appropriate qualifications, knowledge, experience, skills and competency should be appointed to manage the municipality's affairs. The following quotes from the focus-group discussions support these findings.

> *"One of the ways to solve the service delivery challenge is to employ competent people. Yes, we have professionally qualified people in South Africa who can be employed to provide quality services to the communities. As indicated earlier, we must keep appointing people who know little about the job and service delivery"* (Focus group A – ward committees).

> *"We cannot keep repeating the same mistake. Let us do things differently. The leadership must appoint people with the requisites or capabilities to perform on the job. The point I am driving at is that we must appoint qualified personnel to manage service delivery. In doing so, we can tackle service delivery challenges"* (Focus group D – municipal senior officials).

From the findings, quality service delivery depends on the appointment of competent employees. Hence, it is recommended that the selection committee appoint the right candidates to the right positions (Motsoeneng & Kahn, 2013). South African municipalities can save financial costs and resources by appointing competent and skilled people; the appointment of such people is considered a financial investment by most organisations.

4.6.2 Theme 2: Shifting to a stronger client orientation

It is discovered that service delivery in the municipality could be improved through cultivating a strong client orientation. Some participants recommended that the municipality introduce a good customer care system to address customer complaints about service delivery. These participants argued that customers are the backbone of the municipality; hence they must be treated well. Thus, without the community, the municipality cannot survive. The following quotes stemmed from the focus-group discussions.

"The municipality must be client-oriented or introduce a customer care system to address service delivery challenges" (Focus group C – ward committees).

"I am not sure whether my colleagues will agree with me, but what I think should be done is to have a functioning customer care unit at all times to attend to customers' complaints. The municipality should be proactive in attending to people's needs. They must not wait for the problem to happen before looking for solutions. Yes, the customer care unit should always be responsible for community needs" (Focus group D – municipal senior officials).

Sibanda (2012) suggests that monitoring customer service delivery is an important means of improving quality service delivery in local government. Gonu et al. (2023) insist that customer orientation improves customer satisfaction and service delivery. Therefore, they recommend that institutions and policymakers develop comprehensive policies and strategies to improve customer satisfaction and service delivery.

4.6.3 Theme 3: Close monitoring of municipal projects

It has been observed that close monitoring is an effective strategy for improving service delivery in Umzumbe Local Municipality. Most participants suggested that the municipality ensure close monitoring of service delivery. Participants argued that continuous monitoring projects will help to improve service delivery in municipal communities. The conversations from the focus-group discussions that support the findings are stated as follows.

"We recommend that the municipality keep close monitoring of service delivery. This is the best way we can improve on our service delivery mandates" (Focus group B – ward committees).

"Monitoring is the best approach that the municipality should adopt. Service providers and employees should be closely monitored to ensure they perform to their best. Sure, I also support my colleague on this matter. When we monitor, we can see who is doing the job and who is not doing it properly" (Focus group D – municipal senior officials).

Monitoring and evaluation are key features of public service delivery because they promote good governance, accountability, transparency, efficiency and tangible results. Mkhatshwa-Ngwenya and Khumalo (2020) recommend that to improve service delivery, governments and municipalities should monitor and assess the performance of Section 57 administrators and political office

bearers, especially those who regularly underperform. Sharing this view, Masilo et al. (2021) recommend that organisations develop and implement plans to monitor the utilisation of performance information to ensure evidence-based policy-making, planning, and decision-making.

4.6.4 Theme 4: Teamwork

Recently, teamwork has received scholarly attention from practitioners and researchers because it creates a conducive environment that allows people to bring their diverse perspectives to address organisational problems more efficiently and effectively. The study proposed that the municipality introduce teamwork to foster unity and collaboration among the service providers and municipal workers. The participants believed that teamwork empowers them to find better ways of addressing service delivery challenges. Participants recommended that the municipality encourage a teamwork culture because it creates an environment in which people have a common voice and share knowledge to solve problems. The following conversations from the focus-group discussions support the findings.

> *"For me, I think, obviously, we are here with politicians and a political environment. Obviously, we cannot stop political interference. What we can do is to improve the service delivery through teamwork because many staff are demotivated. They don't know what is happening, they feel threatened if they going to lose their jobs as a result, they are just coming in without doing anything. They are getting paid for doing nothing"* (Focus group A – ward committees).

> "*We believe in teamwork to allow people to share knowledge and find common solutions to service delivery challenges. Yes, teamwork will do because when different people come together, they can solve problems collectively"* (Focus group C – ward committees).

Khawam et al. (2017) suggest that teamwork offers better outcomes for organisations than individual work. Therefore, it is suggested that teamwork is the most effective work form that improves organisational performance. Also, Schmutz et al. (2019) concur that teamwork and organisational performance are positively correlated. According to Askari et al. (2020), the collaborative coefficient from teamwork leads to organisational productivity and efficiency.

4.6.5 Theme 5: Political oversight to fight corruption

Based on citizens' perceptions and the "executive fraud triangle", corruption remains a key challenge facing the South African public service. Schnatterly, Gangloff and Tuschke (2018) state that the "executive fraud triangle" is an approach used to explain the antecedents of fraud. Auditors often use this model to assess whether management or the chief executive officer has the incentive to commit fraud. This study recommends that the government, including public officials and politicians, demonstrate a genuine political will to fight corruption. Also, they expressed that politicians should stop politicizing municipalities. The following are some quotes that support the research findings.

> *"You know, this is so deep. I will start with the politicians. They are the root cause of corruption because they put their people in positions that will not report them. So, it is a chain of people. Politicians are not involved in procurement, but they have their people inside. They can influence the process. Politicians should stop politicizing municipalities"* (Focus group B – ward committees).

> *"Political officeholders and politicians should demonstrate political will to combat corruption. Fighting corruption should not be a mere saying, rather, people must demonstrate their willingness to fight it. Corrupt officials must be investigated and, if found culpable, punished severely to serve as a detriment to others"* (Focus group E – ward councilor and committee).

Thusi and Jili (2023) postulate that political office bearers lack the political will to fight corruption which harms and cripples the local governments' ability to provide sustainable public service. Thusi and Jili (2023) believe that the absence of accountability and poor consequence management in municipalities indicates a lack of political will. Against this ground, Thusi and Jili (2023) recommend that to improve service delivery, politicians and political office bearers should demonstrate the political will to fight corruption. Phahlane (2021) suggests that the fight against corruption requires reliable and proactive policies and strategies.

4.6.6 Theme 6: Training

Throughout the literature and findings from this study, there is consensus that most municipalities lack competent people needed to perform the job. The findings indicate that municipalities must train their workforce to deliver better on the job. The participants recommended capacitating

people to acquire the knowledge and capabilities needed to perform their tasks. The quotes from the focus-group discussions that affirm the findings are presented as follows.

> *"What can be done is to capacitate the staff by giving them training and further studies to improve themselves. And to understand the sensitivity of other things within the municipality because the main thing about the municipality is the political environment. So, you will find out that, at times, there is an interference of politics"* (Focus group B – ward committees).

> *"It is training. If you are training, you are training those who have been employed without having qualifications. Skill development for all administrators and political leadership so that they will understand clearly in terms of service delivery"* (Focus group D – municipal senior managers).

The findings reported in the research are similar to those in previous studies. Naidoo and Xollie (2011) propose that there is a need for an integrated leadership approach and training and development programmes to enhance the competencies in public service. Also, Mkhatshwa-Ngwenya and Khumalo (2020) recommend that municipalities design and introduce skills-development programmes that focus on the needs of the local government.

4.6.7 Theme 7: Communication

One of the common challenges cited on poor service delivery is the lack of communication between service providers, public servants, and community members. Therefore, the participants suggested that the municipality put communication mechanisms in place to provide the community and other stakeholders the opportunity of contributing their input on service provision. According to participants, stakeholders should be regularly briefed with new developments and be provided with vital information to assist them in performing their tasks. The following are some quotes from the study in this regard:

> *"Continuous communication and interaction with the community will be important in improving service delivery. The stakeholders should be consulted constantly, and regularly about new projects initiated by the municipality. Also, they must be briefed about the progress made to avoid unnecessary agitations and protests"* (Focus group B – ward committees).

"We can improve service delivery by making sure that proper communication devices are put in place to inform people about the stages of the new projects. Sometimes, people protest because of a lack of communication. Because they are unaware of what is going on in the municipality. Therefore, to solve this problem, the municipality must make communication one of the priority areas" (Focus group C – ward committees).

Ngilambi and McCubbin (2017) confirm that effective communication between municipal officials and all stakeholders is required to provide service more effectively. McCubbin (2017) believe that municipal officials should provide stakeholders with the opportunity to provide inputs into service provision, especially when new projects and changes are required.

4.6.8 Theme 8: Avoidance of political interference

This study observed that political interference is an important challenge affecting service delivery in the Umzumbe Local Municipality. The participants argued that certain officials and councillors often refer to their party mandates when they conduct their duties. This political interference is a big challenge to community members and other stakeholders who do not support political ideology. Against this background, the participants recommended that politicians should stop interfering in the municipal affairs. Participants expressed that political officeholders should stop politicising the municipality, allowing people to perform their jobs; as supported by the following quotes from the focus-group discussions:

"Before we can advise them, let us look at the political interference. This normally starts when change management happens. They hold back information and resistance because they are unsure if they will be staying or leaving. So, when a political party changes, it affects the staff automatically. So, the incoming people need to make sure that these people are professional and are here to work. Appreciate them and make them feel valued in the department. The administration needs to be depoliticized. The party and administration are two different things. You start by employing people because of their qualifications, not because of political influence. Therefore, you staff competent people in the right positions. Furthermore, let the politicians do their politics and the administration do their stuff. When you are in your institution or municipality, people should not wear political attire because sometimes you will find out there is sabotage" (Focus group B – ward committees).

"My simple advice is that let us avoid political interference and allow people to do their job. Politicians should do their politics alone and let others concentrate on their jobs" (Focus group C – ward committees).

The research results are inconsistent with the study by Molepo et al. (2015), who claim that during public participation, it is impossible to separate politics from public participation because political office-bearers would want to honour the interests of their political parties when performing their responsibilities.

4.7 Chapter Summary

Based on the thematic analysis, the study identified the key stakeholders and their roles in service delivery, including municipal officials, ward councillors, ward committees, community members, and suppliers. It is discovered the role of these stakeholders in service delivery, such as ensuring accountability, managing resources, monitoring and evaluating service providers and projects, service delivery protests, supplying materials, and ensuring quality standards. Also, the study found that the nature of services expected by the community members included accessible, affordable, sustainable and quality service. Furthermore, the study identified service delivery challenges in the municipality, such as issues relating to budget/funding, capacity/staff shortage, lack of accountability, corruption, political deployment and political coalitions. To address these service delivery challenges, the study revealed recommendations including appointing competent people, developing a stronger customer-orientation, closer monitoring, more teamwork, demonstrating political will, increasing staff training and communication and avoiding political interference.

Chapter Five: Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

The primary aim of this chapter is to present the conclusion and recommendations of the study. The chapter includes the research limitations and directions for further studies. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, the objectives that guide the investigation were achieved through the qualitative approach. These objectives include:

- To identify the key stakeholders responsible for ensuring service delivery in Umzumbe Local Municipality
- To investigate the nature of services expected from the communities in the Umzumbe Local Municipality
- To determine the service delivery challenges facing Umzumbe Local Municipality
- To make recommendations to the Umzumbe Local Municipality on how to ensure effective service delivery.

5.2 Summary of the Findings

The study identified the key stakeholders and their roles in service delivery, including municipal officials, ward councillors, ward committees, community members, and suppliers. It was discovered that these stakeholders play several roles in service delivery including ensuring accountability from municipalities, managing resources, monitoring and evaluating public service providers and projects, participating in service delivery protests, supplying materials, and ensuring quality standards. Also, the study found that the nature of services expected by the community members included accessible, affordable, sustainable and quality service. Furthermore, the study identified service delivery challenges in the municipality, such as issues relating to budget/funding, capacity/staff shortage, lack of accountability, corruption, political deployment and political coalitions. To address these service delivery challenges, the study revealed recommendations including appointing competent people, developing a stronger customer-orientation, closer monitoring, more teamwork, demonstrating political will, increasing staff training and communication and avoiding political interference.

5.3 Conclusion of the Study

Based on the findings, the following conclusions are drawn.

5.3.1 Objective 1: The Key Stakeholders and their Roles in Service Delivery

The findings revealed the roles of stakeholders in service delivery, including municipal officials, ward councillors, ward committees, community members, and suppliers. It was established that the stakeholders' role in service delivery includes ensuring accountability, managing resources, monitoring and evaluating service providers and projects, reviewing service delivery protests, supplying materials, and ensuring quality standards. The study revealed mixed reactions and feelings among the participants regarding the role of municipal officials in service delivery. While some participants argued that the municipal officials ensured accountability for the resources received, others indicated that they were not accountable. Furthermore, while most participants believed that municipal officials managed the resources received reasonably judiciously, others said they did not.

Also, all participants shared a common view that ward committees play an important role in service delivery through monitoring and evaluating service delivery. The findings showed that ward committees are accountable to the community that elected them. Also, the findings showed that the role of the ward committee toward service delivery includes participating in plans and programmes of municipalities, facilitating community participation in all affairs of the municipality and monitoring and evaluating service delivery.

Besides, the study findings revealed that the community members' role in service delivery includes monitoring the performance of service providers and the municipality and service delivery protest. The overall findings indicated that the community members and interest groups were involved in service delivery processes in the municipality.

Also, there were mixed reactions among the participants on the role of suppliers in the timely supply of materials and goods and on meeting the quality standards. While some participants argued that the suppliers supplied the materials and goods to the municipality on time, some argued that they sometimes failed. Moreover, it was found that at times the materials and goods supplied by the suppliers do not meet the quality standard, resulting in service delivery protests.

5.3.2 Objective 2: The Nature of Services Expected from the Communities

The study found that the nature of services expected by the community members included accessible, affordable, sustainable, and quality service. The findings suggested that although many communities demand that their municipalities provide accessible services, especially to the deprived areas, they are unwilling to pay for such services.

Furthermore, the study found that community members demanded that they pay barely the minimum cost for basic services. It was established that the community always wants the municipality to make services cheaper. Also, participants indicated that the municipality subsidizes the costs associated with the basic services to enable community members to afford them.

Besides, it was discovered that the community members expected the municipality to supply quality services to improve their livelihood. The findings concluded that the community members have the right to demand quality services, and the municipality must acknowledge such rights.

In addition, it was found that most community members are more concerned about the environmental impact of the service delivery in the municipality. The community members wanted the municipality to adopt sustainability to ensure efficient use of resources without compromising the future generation.

5.3.3 Objective 3: Service Delivery Challenges facing Umzumbe Local Municipality

The findings demonstrated that lack of funding negatively impacted service delivery in the municipality. The overall findings suggested that the municipality does not have adequate budget allocation to fund its projects. Also, this study discovered that lack of accountability remains a key challenge affecting service delivery in the Umzumbe Local Municipality. It was argued that because most vehicles and assets do not belong to the drivers and other officials, these staff members failed to be accountable. The study concluded that municipal officials are not accountable for either stewardship.

Besides, there is a common understanding that political deployment stifled quality service delivery in the Umzumbe Local Municipality. The findings indicated that because of political deployment, incompetent officials are appointed to senior management positions in the municipality, resulting in service delivery failures. This implies that appointments are based on political influence and party affiliation rather than competency.

Furthermore, the study observed that lack of capacity was a key challenge for service delivery failure and protests in the municipality. The participants expressed that most municipalities do not have skilled people and technocrats to ensure undisrupted service delivery. The situation keeps worsening, resulting in many service delivery protests.

In addition, evidence from the study suggests that corruption remains a crucial challenge affecting service delivery in the municipality. It has been found that money meant for municipal projects was diverted into private pockets. Also, it has been established that corruption is rising due to poor control mechanisms and lack of political will.

The findings indicated that a political coalition does not affect service delivery, but it works better because of the agreements entered into by the political parties. The participants argued that a political coalition is a good approach to governance that reduces political dominance, leading to improved service delivery.

The study established that Umzumbe Local Municipality faced a significant challenge in keeping its employees, leading to poor service delivery. It has been found that the municipality struggled to provide quality services due to the inability to keep competent people.

Finally, the study revealed that leadership changes were the biggest challenge affecting service delivery in the Umzumbe Local Municipality. It was found that the frequent changes in the leadership within the municipality were daunting to the effort toward service delivery.

5.3.4 Objective 4: Recommendations on Ways to Ensure Effective Service Delivery

The study identified the following recommendations to improve service delivery: appointing competent people, customer-orientation, close monitoring, teamwork, demonstrating political will, staff training, communication and avoiding political interference.

5.4 Recommendations of the Study

The following recommendations stem from the research findings:

5.4.1 Recommendation 1: Demonstrate political will to fight corruption

The findings suggested that money meant for municipal projects was diverted into private pockets. Against this background, the study recommends that political office bearers and municipal officials demonstrate the political will toward combatting corruption. As suggested by the participants,

corruption erasure in South African municipalities should start with the politicians. Hence, politicians must demonstrate a willingness to fight corruption. In addition, the study recommends that the municipality strengthen anti-corruption agencies to detect and fight corruption. Moreover, corrupt public servants be investigated and punished when found guilty to serve as a deterrent to others.

5.4.2 Recommendation 2: Sufficient budget allocation

It is undeniable that insufficient budget allocation or source of funding remains a critical issue affecting Umzumbe Local Municipality. The findings confirmed that the lack of funding negatively impacted service delivery in the municipality. For this reason, the study recommends that a sufficient budget be allocated to the Umzumbe Local Municipality to meet its service delivery mandates. Besides, the study recommends that the municipality explore alternative funding sources such as property taxes, service charges, traffic fines and donations to fund both new and existing projects.

5.4.3 Recommendation 3: Appoint more competent staff

The study observed that lack of capacity was a key challenge for service delivery failure and protests in the Umzumbe Local Municipality. Hence, the participants recommended that the municipality appoint competent people to manage service delivery. Participants argued that political parties avoid appointing people based on party affiliation. It was suggested that only people with knowledge, experience, skills and competency be appointed to handle the municipality's affairs. The researcher also agrees with the recommendations made by the participants. Therefore, the study recommends that Umzumbe Local Municipality appoint people with the requisite skills, knowledge, experiences, competencies and abilities to deliver. In addition, the study recommends that the municipality implement capacity-building programmes to help people to acquire the personal requisites needed to function more effectively and efficiently. The municipality should tap into the competencies of the stakeholders to advance development in the area and to use their innovative skills and ideas effectively during public participation to benefit the community.

5.4.4 Recommendation 4: Open communication

It has been argued that poor service delivery occurs due to a lack of communication between the stakeholders. Therefore, this study recommends that the municipality implement communication

mechanisms to provide the community and other stakeholders the opportunity of contributing input on service provision.

5.4.5 Recommendation 5: Encourage teamwork

It is believed that teamwork creates a conducive environment that allows people to bring their diverse perspectives to address organisational problems more efficiently and effectively. The study recommends that the municipality introduce teamwork to foster unity and collaboration among the service providers and municipal workers. Also, the study recommends that the municipality encourage a teamwork culture because it creates an environment in which people have a common voice and share knowledge to solve problems.

5.4.6 Recommendation 6: Encourage stakeholder participation

The findings revealed that the key stakeholders involved in service delivery are municipal officials, ward councillors, ward committees, community members, and suppliers. The study established their role including ensuring accountability, managing resources, monitoring and evaluating service providers and projects, and service delivery protests, supplying materials and ensuring quality standards. Therefore, it is recommended that the municipality encourage a culture of stakeholder participation in service delivery matters. Furthermore, the study recommends that councillors and municipal officials engage stakeholders, such as community members, interest groups and media, in all the planning and processes, including service delivery.

5.5 Limitations of the Study and Directions for Future Research

The study was conducted in the Umzumbe Local Municipality. By implication, the findings could only be transferred to the Umzumbe Local Municipality. Thus, research findings could not be extended to other municipalities in South Africa. Hence, the study recommends that future research include more than one municipality. Also, this study adopted the qualitative research approach. A key limitation of qualitative research is the inability to generalise the findings to the study population. Therefore, it is suggested that quantitative qualitative research be carried out to mitigate the limitations of the qualitative and quantitative methods.

5.6 Chapter Summary

The study identified the key stakeholders in service delivery, including municipal officials, ward councillors, ward committees, community members, and suppliers. The study established that their roles in service delivery involved ensuring accountability, managing resources, monitoring and

evaluating service providers and projects and service delivery protests, supplying materials and ensuring quality standards. Also, the study found that the nature of services expected by the community members included accessible, affordable, sustainable, and quality service. Furthermore, the study identified the service delivery challenges the municipality faced, including funding, capacity/staff shortage, lack of accountability, corruption, political deployment and political coalition. The study proposed the following recommendations: appointing competent people, customer orientation, close monitoring, teamwork, demonstrating political will, staff training, communication, and avoiding political interference.

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Appendix A: Interview Schedule

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP

MCLS Research Project
Researcher: Emmanuel Sibusiso Ngcobo ([redacted])
Supervisors: Prof Cecile Gerwel Proches & Dr Nikita Singh (0312608318)
Research Office: Ms. P Ximba (0312603587)

Exploring Perceptions of Service Delivery in Umzumbe Municipality

Interview Questions

- Who are the key stakeholders within Umzumbe Municipality?
- What is the role of each stakeholder?
- What type of service do you expect from the Umzumbe Municipality?
- What is the current state of the affairs regarding the services offered?
- What challenges are facing the municipality?
- How can these challenges be addressed?
- What assistance does Umzumbe Municipality need?
- How could the various levels of government assist?
- What is the role of the Integrated Development Plan (IDP)? What is the role of the various stakeholders?
- How can you support your municipality and community?
- Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

Information Sheet and Consent to Participate in Research

Date: 27 May 2023

Dear Participants,

My name is **Emmanuel Sibusiso Ngcobo**, from the **Graduate School of Business and Leadership** within the **University of KwaZulu-Natal**. My email address is **216056728@stu.ukzn.ac.za** and contact numbers are [redacted]. My supervisors are **Prof. Gerwel Proches** (primary supervisor) and **DR Nikita Singh** (co-supervisor) who are also located in the same School. Their email addresses are **Gerwel@ukzn.ac.za and SinghN@ukzn.ac.za.**

You are being invited to consider participating in a study that involves research into "**Exploring perceptions of service delivery in Umzumbe Local Municipality, South Africa".** The aim and purpose of this research is to explore the community perceptions of service delivery in Umzumbe Local Municipality. Additionally, the study aims to address the poor service delivery and protest in South African municipalities. The study is expected to enroll 10 participants who are at the cold front of service delivery, those are ward committee members. The duration of your participation if you choose to enroll and remain in the study is expected to be one month. The study is not funded by any individual or organisation.

The study involves no risks. We hope that the study will create the following benefits: it will help provide a better understanding of service deliver failure within the South African context, it will help provide more understanding of how service delivery is measured in the municipality, it will help to understand the role of stakeholders in service delivery and it will serve as a strategic tool for improving service delivery in South African municipalities. This study would involve the collection of **qualitative data** from the participants. The participants in this study will not be subjected to any treatment**.**

This study involves no potential risk or discomfort. Notwithstanding this, necessary steps and measures will be taken to protect the participants against any possible risks.

This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (**HSSREC/00001626/2020**).

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact the researcher at (216056728@stu.ukzn.ac.za or @ [redacted]) 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.X54001
Durban
4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Participation in this research is voluntary and that participants may withdraw participation at any point, and that in the event of refusal/withdrawal of participation the participants will not incur penalty or loss of treatment or other benefit to which they are normally entitled. No costs would be incurred by participants as a result of participation in the study. Also, no incentive will be offered to the participants to induce them.

The anonymity of the research participants will be protected by replacing their personal information with pseudonyms within the thesis, oral presentations, and subsequent publications. The confidentiality of the participants will be ensured by making sure that the data collected is stored at a more secured place in the University.

Investigator's signature

[redacted]

Date: 15 August 2023

E S Ngcobo

CONSENT (PARTICIPATION IN THE STUDY: EXPLORING PERCEPTIONS OF SERVICE DELIVERY IN UMZUMBE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, SA)

I…… have been informed about the study entitled "Exploring perceptions of service delivery in Umzumbe Local Municipality, South Africa" by Emmanuel Sibusiso Ngcobo

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study is to explore perceptions of service delivery in Umzumbe Local Municipality.

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 216056728@stu.ukzn.ac.za or [redacted]

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about any 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 (Where applicable) **Date**

Appendix C: Research Protocol

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

08 April 2024

Emmanuel Sibusiso Ngcobo (216056728)
Grad School of Bus & Leadership
Westville Campus

Dear ES Ngcobo,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00001626/2020
Project title: Exploring perceptions of service delivery in Umzumbe Municipality, South Africa
Amended title: Exploring perceptions of service delivery in Umzumbe Local Municipality, South Africa
Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Amendment Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application and request for an amendment received on 26 March 2024 has now been approved as follows:

- Change in title

Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form; Title of the Project, Location of the Study must be reviewed and approved through an 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.

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

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.

Yours faithfully

[redacted]

.....
Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Tel: +27 31 260 8350 / 4557 / 3587
Website: http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/
Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

Appendix D: Gatekeeper Permission Letter

UMZUMBE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY
UMASIPAI.A W ASEMZUMBE

C/o P.o. Box 561 Tel: c/0 039 972 0005
HIBBERDENE Fax: c/0 0399720099
4220 E-mail: [redacted] Umzumbe

MUNICIPALITY OFFICE OF THE MUNICIPAL MANAGER

03 November 2022

Attention: Prof Cecile Gerwel Proches
Graduate school of Business and Leadership
University of KwaZulu-Natal
Westville Campus
Durban
3630

Dear Sir

Re: Permission to conduct a study within Umzumbe Local Municipality

This letter bears reference:

Umzumbe Local Municipality has received a request to conduct a study on exploring perceptions of service delivery in Umzumbe Local Municipality, South Africa.

It is in this context that this letter serves to authorize Mr. Emmanuel Sibusiso Ngcobo to conduct the abovementioned study within Umzumbe Local Municipality.

Please be informed that after the conclusion of the study Umzumbe Local Municipality request to be apprised of the research report and recommendations.

I hope that this is in order.

Regards

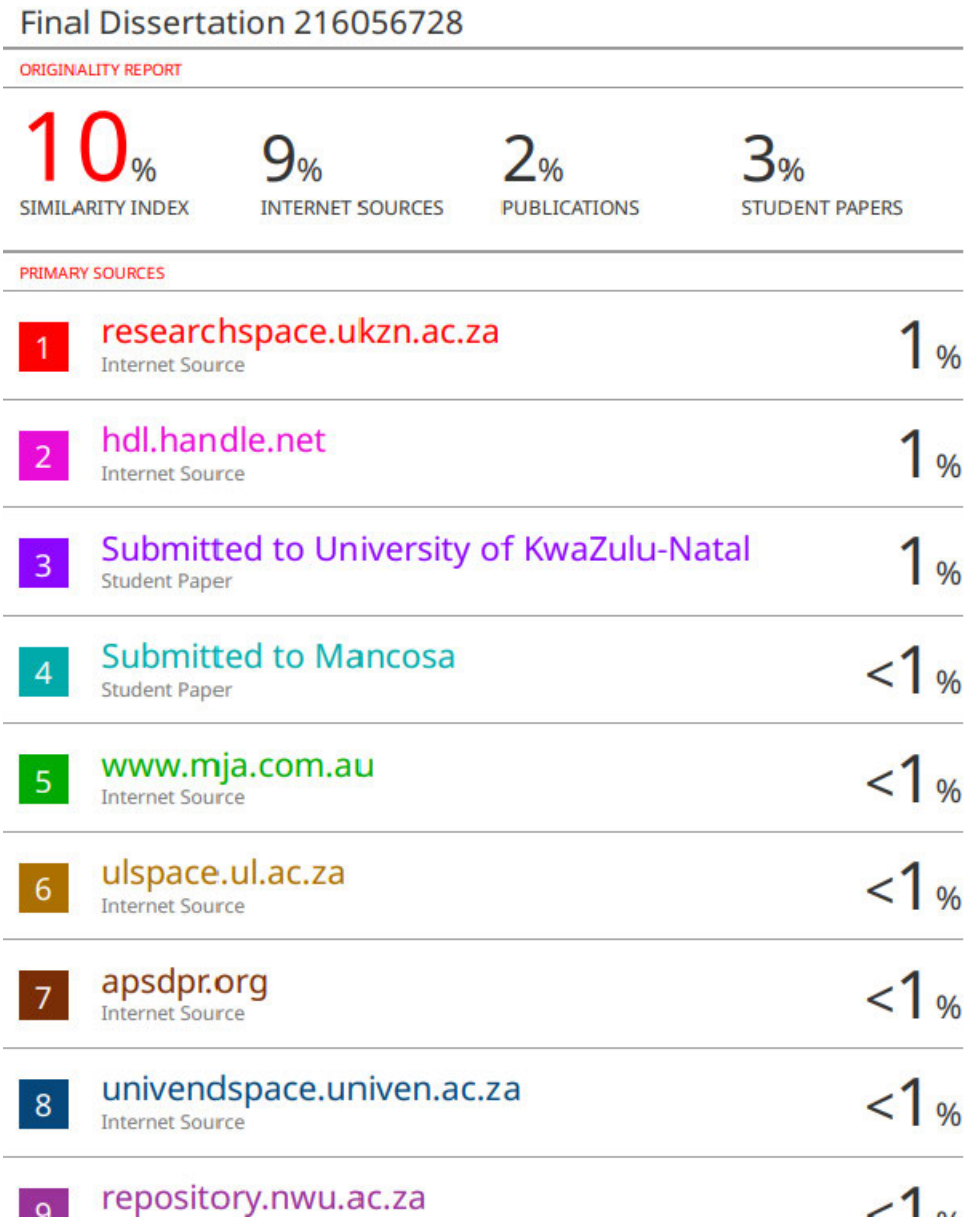
[redacted]

T P Cele

Municipal Manager

Umzumbe Local Municipality

Appendix E: Turnitin



Final Dissertation 216056728

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Appendix F: Proofreading Certificate

pinpoint
Proofreading Services

Lydia Weight
NTSD English Specialist
SACE No: 11135129

E-mail: [redacted]

Pinpoint Proofreading Services

40 Ridge Rd

Kloof

Durban

3610

12 Nov 2023

To whom it may concern

This is to certify that I, Lydia Weight, have proofread the document titled: Exploring community perceptions towards service delivery in Umzumbe Local Municipality, South Africa, by Emmanuel Ngcobo. I have made all the necessary corrections. The document is therefore ready for presentation to the destined authority.

Yours faithfully

[redacted]

L. Weight