PARTICIPATION LEVELS OF YOUNG WOMEN IN MUNICIPAL CIVIC PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESSES IN CAPE TOWN

ABIGAIL JACOBS – WILLIAMS

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Magister Artium (MA) in Development Studies, Institute for Social Development, University of the Western Cape

Supervisor: Professor Daniel Tevera

UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE

July 2024

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DECLARATION

I declare that *"Participation levels of young women in municipal civic public participation processes in Cape Town"* is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university, and that all sources I have quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

Abigail Jacobs – Williams

July 2024

Signed: ……

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank God for the opportunity to complete my Masters amidst some difficult and often trying circumstances. This thesis is a tangible testimony of God's faithfulness towards me and His consistent Grace upon my life.

I would like to express my sincerest thank you and appreciation to the following people who carried me through their confidence in me and their prayers for me:

- My daughter Salem who always pushes me to do and be better. Whenever I felt like giving up, I remembered that she was watching me, and I decided to push through. You were my light through many dark nights of writing, my baby girl!
- My superior, Professor Daniel Tevera, for always challenging me and encouraging me to think beyond what I see. Thank you for your consistency and belief in this project.
- The young women who willingly participated in the study and shared their experiences willingly – your voices are necessary for our communities to win!
- Thank you to Bonita Smith, Bridgette Ambrose, and Alex Jehoma, who willingly supported me in recruiting the participants.
- The youth development and local government practitioners that shared invaluable ideas that will only benefit the communities they serve so passionately
- A special thank you to Pastor Dianne Martin and Rev Denise Francis for always checking in on the writing process, for reminding me that God has me and for the constant prayers that I always felt go out for me.
- A very special thank you and acknowledgement to my sister friends, Charmaine Fortuin, Shiron Trout - September and Mandisa Banjwa – Slabber, who literally walked this road with me, stayed up late with me when I was writing, told me to 'fetch myself' when I was procrastinating for too long and held me accountable every step of the way. I could never have asked for a better hype crew. You guys are appreciated.

Lastly, this thesis is dedicated to my parents, Louis and Rachel Jacobs, who always believed in me, no matter what. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to go to university and ignite a passion for studying, which their love for me always keeps alive. I thank you for your unwavering support through some of the toughest times. I hope this thesis makes you proud.

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KEY WORDS

1. Participation
2. Local government
3. Public participation processes
4. Young women
5. Youth practitioners
6. Social media
7. Gender
8. City of Cape Town
9. Metro council

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ACRONYMS

CBO	Community-Based Organisation/ s
CoCT	City of Cape Town
CT	Cape Town
ECD	Early Childhood Development
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
ICT	Information and Community Technology
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
IEC	Independent Electoral Commission
ISS	Institute of Security Studies
NYDP	National Youth Development Policy
PCD	People-Centred Development
SA	South Africa
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UWC	University of the Western Cape

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ABSTRACT

Thesis title: Participation levels of young women in municipal civic public participation processes in Cape Town

This study aimed to understand the challenges and barriers that young women aged 18 to 25 from three communities in the Cape Town Metro, namely, Manenberg, Mitchells Plain and Bellville between the ages of 18 to 25, encounter when engaging in local government participation processes. The study sought to closely examine the potential outcomes for both these young women and the larger community in which they live if their participation is given priority and integrated into local government processes, procedures, and interventions.

This study followed a qualitative research approach that attempted to be open-ended and adaptable in order to seek and comprehend how individuals who participated in the study perceived the research topic given the communities that they reside in and their local government contexts. Two research instruments were used, i.e. in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with the participants.

From the literature reviewed, it becomes clear that the implications of not ensuring the participation of young women in local government processes that require their voice is detrimental to any community, particularly given the growing youth bulge in South Africa as a whole.

Despite the wealth of research on the involvement of young women during adolescence, there exists a gap in our knowledge of the participation levels of young South African women in civic activities. As young women's experiences are often not prioritised, the specific issues they encounter in public engagement remain unaddressed. Even though they may not fully understand the function and responsibilities of local government, it is evident that young women aspire to partake in decision-making processes that impact their future prospects and livelihoods.

In terms of communication, from the conducted interviews, some young people in Cape Town prefer more traditional or "old school" methods such as outdoor meetings and printed materials such as booklets and posters. The realm of local government is designed to facilitate public engagement. It is crucial to acknowledge that the current emphasis is primarily on

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electioneering and prioritising involvement primarily for political benefit, particularly during local and national elections.

While prioritising policies and programmes is essential, it is equally imperative to amplify the voices of the women politicians believe would "benefit" from these interventions. Efforts should be intensified to educate young women about the consequences of non-participation in society and how their actions impact their futures and influence the prospects of their children, who will grow up in the communities they currently inhabit.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

The roles of South African women in different levels of government, i.e. the local, provincial, and national levels, have undergone significant evolution over the past three decades. Their participation in government civic processes has played a crucial role in this transformation. Studies conducted over the years have shown that when women are actively involved and consulted, communities prosper, and government institutions are more responsive. Myeni (2014) emphasises that the political participation of women acts as an indicator of the extent to which they are able to exercise their political rights. South Africa has acknowledged that equality, development, and peace cannot be achieved without women's perspectives being actively engaged in politics and considered at all levels. Various organisations and publications attest to South Africa's commendable progress in facilitating women's participation in government. The SA Constitution safeguards numerous rights for women, encompassing equality, freedom and safety, and decision-making authority concerning their health and bodies.

However, South African women, especially young women, encounter numerous challenges, necessitating strategic and inclusive interventions at all levels of government, particularly at the local government level. However, achieving this requires a shift in the politics of local government, moving beyond viewing and utilising women merely as token representatives or voters. According to Mindzie (2015), women have adapted by maximising their participation in civil society movements and active involved in associations addressing development, health, and education, in response to their political marginalisation. Such engagements offer a platform for women to enhance their political involvement.

Mindzie (2015) further states that women's participation should be leveraged to enhance capacity building, emphasising areas such as communication, advocacy, conflict management, mediation, gender mainstreaming, public administration, and leadership. This approach aims to facilitate meaningful participation while minimising token representation.

In the context of South Africa, the local government is considered the level closest to the people, providing accessibility to political representatives and officials, unlike the Provincial

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and National government spheres. The local government is at the forefront of addressing the service delivery challenges directly impacting communities. Nyalunga (2006) asserts that Chapter 7, Section 157 of the 1993 New South African Constitution states that municipalities are required by law to provide citizens with various services. Nyalunga further asserts that municipalities are legally mandated to provide citizens with a range of services, support social and economic development, ensure a safe and healthy environment, promote democratic and accountable governance, and encourage community participation in local government issues.

Van Belle and Cupido (2013) highlight the commended aspect of South Africa's constitution, which prioritises public participation. Section 152 of the Constitution focuses on democracy, accountability, and public engagement in local government matters. The Local Government Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000, particularly Section 16 (1), underscores the importance of citizen participation in local issues and mandates municipalities to ensure such engagement in government operations.

In essence, the South African constitution underscores the crucial role of local municipal Councils in driving sustainable development, entrusting them with the vital task of delivering essential services to diverse communities across the nation.

1.2 Problem statement

Research by Levac (2012) indicates that public participation in policy-making is increasingly crucial, yet there remains a notable gap in the discourse concerning the participation of young women. The unique personal, social, economic and political circumstances of young women provide a key perspective often overlooked in the study or practice of youth civic engagement or public participation in policy-making. This oversight is particularly concerning given that issues such as service delivery and the pervasive threat of gender-based violence disproportionately impact young women on a daily basis, highlighting the need for inclusion in policy discussions.

Furthermore, Kehlet (2001) contends that women in South Africa still encounter barriers to accessing resources and opportunities, with race, class, and gender serving as prevailing determinants of the country's enduring political, social, and economic inequality, notably at the local government level. While the role of women in local government in South Africa has been

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and continues to be the subject of research, the emphasis has primarily been on women's involvement as officials and councillors (politicians) rather than as active citizens grappling with the daily challenges of service delivery, particularly at the local government level.

The research indicates that young women are marginalised due to prevalent perceptions of youth as apathetic and young femininity as situated in conflict between crisis and power (Levac, 2012). Phawasa (2009) suggests that the overlapping paradigms in youth studies and thought are comparable in the South African context. Historically, South African discussions on youth were dominated by the "problem" and "victim" paradigms, with varying appellations such as "young lions," "young warriors," "Generation X," "militants," and "victims of apartheid." Therefore, it becomes evident that these 'labels' need to be updated to reflect current issues pertaining not only to South African youth but specifically to young women in South Africa.

Memela (2021) contends that the perception of youth as a threat to the status quo, particularly within the context of gerontocracy control, and their subsequent stigmatisation as rebellious, confrontational, counter-hegemonic, or subversive is influenced by their role in propelling change. This is evident in various dichotomies in discussions on youth in Africa, such as "makers vs breakers," "perpetrators vs victims," "leaders vs led," "innovators vs dupes," "vanguards vs vandals," and "promise vs peril," their role is ambiguous, contentious, or even controversial. These classifications elucidate the diverse preconceptions and the myriad challenges that African youth encounter, impacting their identities and relationships within the broader community, from issues of unemployment to a lack of social recognition. In many societies, young people are still perceived as social adjuncts, assuming a supporting, subservient, and marginalised role in relation to adults.

The presumption that young women are not sufficiently enthusiastic to act as change agents and are disinterested in issues affecting their communities effectively disqualifies them as potential participants in public engagement initiatives (Levac, 2012).

Khambule (2021) highlights that the complex, demanding, and ever-changing global environment in which today's youth live marginalises their social, political, and economic goals. Despite comprising the largest segment of the population, especially in Africa and other developing countries, youth remain significantly underrepresented in leadership and decision-

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making roles. Youth in South Africa encounter various socioeconomic challenges, including limited access to the labour market and underrepresentation in the policymaking process.

A review of the literature on the involvement of young women reveals a research gap regarding the role of younger women at the local level, particularly in South Africa, and their contributions to community agencies. Mitchell, de Lange, and Moletsane (2018) contend that young girls' activism is a significantly underexplored and neglected area of scholarly research, largely absent from academic discourse on girlhoods and social movements. Research on girls' studies has predominantly focused on themes such as self-esteem, psychology, sexuality and sexual behaviour, friendships, schools and peer relationships, media consumption and production, cultural practices, and issues related to identity construction in various contexts. This focus underscores the need to recognise the role of young women as active citizens who, in addition to experiencing the issues commonly addressed in current research, strive to ensure that their voices extend beyond these immediate concerns.

Hicks (2011) argues that the lack of research necessitates an examination of the extent to which existing mechanisms for participation facilitate the accommodation of equity issues by enabling women residing in impoverished environments and other marginalised or vulnerable groups to engage in governance activities. If local councils claim to be inclusive and endorse participatory governance, they should demonstrate how they represent the diverse roles of women, particularly by highlighting the voices of young women.

According to Oxfam (2018), it is a known truth that women experience poverty at a disproportionate and extreme rate - "not just as material deprivation, but as marginalization." Because of this, gender inequality is upheld and sustained, denying poor women any or minimal ability to have an impact on the political, economic, and social systems and organisations that govern and shape their lives and keep them mired in a cycle of poverty. At the local government level, it becomes crucial to ensure the participation of women given the high levels of poverty faced by women, which already ‘stack the odds’ against them. Therefore, women cannot also face the burden of ‘participation poverty’ or poverty due to lack of participation.

The study assumes that the impediments and hurdles that prevent young women between the ages of 18 and 25 from engaging in local government procedures are closely related to inclusive

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participation, which may ultimately benefit the broader communities that they live in, as highlighted by Walsh (2006). According to Walsh (2006), democratic theorists have long held the view that political participation is invaluable as it ensures that the concerns and demands of residents are considered during political engagement processes. Furthermore, citizens benefit from participation as it prompts them to deliberate and evaluate their needs in the context of the larger community and the nation. In essence, participation is believed to cultivate proactive citizens.

Furthermore, although they may be involved in other organisations that impact local policies, women and other vulnerable and marginalised groups should be more frequently and purposefully included in formal and informal political activity. In order to provide a more precise and richer picture of the obstacles and strategies that improve participation for all citizens in all public spheres, it is imperative that a variety of activism and communication in what is considered a democratic society be reviewed. This includes both what is viewed as the formal and informal spheres of political activity (Walsh, 2006).

The study, therefore, assumes that:

- If the City of Cape Town made deliberate efforts to incorporate the voices of young women in their local government interventions, it would yield benefits for the broader communities in which these young women reside and promote active citizenship.
- There is a dearth of research focusing on the specific age category of young women aged 18 to 25. Their absence leads to ineffective and irrelevant interventions at the local government level, considering their substantial presence in local communities.

1.3 Research Questions

1. Why is it important for young women from Cape Town to participate in their council's public participation processes?
2. What are the participation levels of young women from Cape Town who participate in their council's public participation processes?
3. Do young women from Cape Town want to participate in their council's public participation processes?
4. What are the benefits to the City of Cape Town in ensuring that young women participate in its public participation processes?

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5. Is the City of Cape Town using the correct tools to communicate its public participation processes specifically to women aged 18 – 25?
6. What measures should be instituted in order to ensure the participation of women aged 18 – 25 in their council's public participation processes?

1.4 Aim of the study

The primary objective of this study is to examine the levels of participation among young women in the civic engagement processes of the City of Cape Town. The study aims to evaluate the willingness of young women aged between 18 and 25 to participate, as well as their current involvement in the City of Cape Town's public participation processes. Furthermore, the study seeks to propose measures to ensure that the voices of young women are not only heard but also included in future processes, considering that local issues significantly impact young women on a daily basis.

1.5 Objectives of the study

The study seeks to:

1. Determine the participation levels of young women in the City of Cape Town's local government public participation processes
2. Understand the issues that determine the involvement of young women in local government public participation processes.
3. Determine the outcomes of the participation of young women in local government processes in the City of Cape Town

1.6 Rationale for the study

South African women have historically been active participants in pivotal events that have shaped the country's history and continue to influence its present context, with the aim of fostering a prosperous future for subsequent generations. Empowering women in civic and political spheres is fundamental for democracy and progress, as highlighted by Lean, Eckert, Jun, Gerring, and Lacouture (2021). In the South African context, women's empowerment in political matters has been and continues to be of great significance. During the Apartheid era, women played a pivotal role in effecting positive change in South Africa and contributed to

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dismantling the barriers imposed by apartheid, particularly for people of colour. The events of 9 August 1956 underscore the collective mobilisation of women in the pursuit of much-needed change during that period. The South African National Youth Development Policy of 2020 - 2030 defines youth (young people) as individuals falling within the age group of 14 to 35 years. Although the precise number of young women among the participants on that day is unknown, it is undeniable that women in various roles, including mothers, sisters, daughters, employees, and female children, came together to advocate for the common good, compelling the government to listen.

According to Obalade, A. (2021), citizen engagement in political processes is a crucial aspect of representative democracy, ensuring that everyone, including the most vulnerable members of society, such as young people, can exercise their right to vote. However, despite the right to engage in politics in a democracy, participation is often unevenly distributed throughout society, particularly among vulnerable groups.

Eid (2018) notes a global increase in the use of gender-neutral language towards the end of the 20th century as women sought acknowledgement, visibility, validation, and the opportunity to voice and address their concerns in the public sphere. Historians generally recognise women's struggle for international citizenship as a significant emancipation movement of the 20th century. South African women, both locally and internationally, have made significant contributions and underscored the need for young women to be prepared for active citizenship, akin to the women of 9 August 1956, if governments seek their effective contribution to the future well-being of their communities.

Despite global and national progress in participation, young women aged 18 to 25 in Cape Town's communities encounter numerous challenges. Many face safety concerns, lack prioritisation of their education, experience increasing teenage pregnancy rates, and contend with high unemployment. Local government in the South African context is regarded as the level closest to the people and is intended to be the most responsive to their needs given its mandate. However, in the City of Cape Town, the voices of young women residing in the marginalised and vulnerable communities they serve appear to be disregarded in various public participation processes.

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African youth empowerment plays a pivotal role in shaping the desired future for Africa (Enaifoghe & Dlamini, 2021). The young demographic composition of South Africa's population suggests that the youth bear the brunt of the country's socioeconomic challenges, encompassing social inequality, unemployment, poverty, and inadequate access to healthcare. Addressing the extensive issues confronting South Africa requires comprehensive approaches to simultaneously promote sustainable livelihoods, reduce social inequality and poverty, and formulate practical policies that create an enabling environment to support the aspirations of young people. Hence, youth development remains one of the most pressing issues in South Africa.

Mindzie (2015) contends that the barriers posed by exclusive, restrictive, and unaccountable governance must be addressed to enhance the political engagement of women and young people. Furthermore, the implementation of policies supporting people-centred governance is essential, warranting further research to understand the barriers obstructing the participation of young women in civic activities.

Much academic scrutiny and reflection has focused on the effectiveness and defects of participatory mechanisms in connecting citizens' voices with government decision-making. For example, Hicks (2011) argues that the marginalised or vulnerable groups can be empowered by enabling them, especially women living in poverty, to be proactive in governance processes. According to Hicks (2011), local government efforts must be taken to guarantee that the right policies and planning instruments are utilised in order for significant initiatives that seek to fulfil the needs of benefit young women to be fruitful. Furthermore, to attain optimal outcomes, involving young women at every intervention stage is imperative, from its conceptualisation and "birth" to its execution. Interventions can no longer be conceived, born, and executed at the top without considering the "bottom". Therefore, for young women to make a meaningful contribution to the well-being of their communities in the future, they must be equipped for active citizenship (Eid, 2018), particularly at their community levels.

1.7 Significance of the study

This research forms part of the gender agenda debate, specifically focusing on examining the role of young women, particularly in the era of social media and various other platforms that advocate for equal participation across all genders.

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Therefore, the primary contribution of this research is twofold, i.e.:

1) Firstly, to demonstrate the absence of young women's voices at the various levels of government despite their crucial importance to public participation processes, as indicated by existing literature.
2) Secondly, it illustrates that utilising various tools and platforms to ensure the participation of young women in local government processes can lead to increased active citizenry, ultimately benefiting the local communities served by municipalities.

In addition, the purpose of this research is to contribute to the existing body of research on women's participation in civic and community development affairs. Furthermore, the research aims to gain a better understanding of young women's involvement in Cape Town's public participation processes, particularly in light of the service delivery challenges that young women encounter in the city.

1.8 Chapter outline

- **Chapter 1: Introduction**

  The first chapter provides an introduction and contextualisation of the study. It also includes the problem statement, rationale, significance of the study, research aims, objectives and methodology used.

- **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

  The second chapter focuses on the study's literature review and delves into the existing body of knowledge and information on the topic. It also reviews key concepts linked to the focus of the study.

- **Chapter 3: Theoretical and Conceptual Framework**

  The third chapter presents the theoretical and conceptual framework that was used, which in the case of this study was the People-Centred Development (PCD) Theory.

- **Chapter 4: Methodology**

  The fourth chapter details the methodology used to conduct the study.

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- **Chapter 5: Data Analysis, Findings and Discussions**

  The fifth chapter presents the data analysis of the information gathered through the interviews and focus groups facilitated by the interviewees, as well as the research findings based on the data. It further discusses the findings in more detail.

- **Chapter 6: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations**

  The sixth chapter provides a summary of the study as well as a conclusion and recommendations stemming from the study.

1.9 Conclusion

This chapter summarises the study's overall purpose with a particular focus on highlighting the structure of my thesis. It provided an introduction and contextualisation of the study. The background presented as part of the introduction shapes the context in which the research took place. The research questions posed wish to establish their 'answers' through the envisioned objectives of the study. This chapter also positions the study in terms of its aims and significance as it develops through the flowing chapters. The structure of the thesis was also laid out to ensure order and fluidity.

The second chapter will focus on the literature reviewed for the study and delve into the existing body of knowledge and information on the topic whilst also reviewing key concepts linked to the focus of the study.

Chapter Three will present the theoretical and conceptual framework used, i.e., the People-Centred Development (PCD) Theory. The fourth chapter will detail the methodology used to conduct the study.

Chapter Five will present the research findings through the interviews and focus groups facilitated by the interviewees, as well as discussions and data analysis of the information gathered. Chapter six will provide a summary, conclusion, and recommendations for further study based on what the research presents.

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Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

The literature review delves into the current literature concerning key concepts related to matters around participation, particularly within the various spheres of government, with a specific focus on local government in South Africa. This focus on local government in South Africa will also be central to the research study.

This chapter first sets the stage regarding the current universal context on local government functioning and the importance of ensuring that young and older women are included in the civic participation process and that all spheres of government should prioritise their participation. This chapter delves into current debates on participation and other essential concepts linked to the importance of advocating for young women's inclusion in public participation processes at the local government level.

This chapter also delineates the emerging gaps observed in the literature, specifically identifying the primary issues that hinder women and young women from engaging or expressing interest in participating in local government public participation processes. Additionally, the literature review facilitates the identification of opportunities for improvement based on ongoing global endeavours and specific initiatives in Cape Town aimed at addressing some of these gaps.

This chapter will also review post-apartheid debates concerning public participation at the local level and the involvement of women in the struggle against apartheid, considering the significant contributions of South African women to the nation's liberation efforts. These debates will also seek to reinforce the necessity of conducting a study such as this and highlight potential opportunities for future research endeavours aimed at enhancing the existing literature. Upon reviewing the literature, the necessity for this study will become evident based on the existing body of knowledge or lack thereof concerning the facilitation of participation among youth, particularly young women.

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2.2 Broad universal context on the participation of youth and women at the local level

The participation of young women in local government public participation processes worldwide is crucial for the development of the countries that these young women are from and reside in. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2015), in order to achieve and preserve safe and secure communities, fully realise human rights, end hunger, poverty, and disease, and advance sustainable development, women are indispensable. As these issues affect women on a daily basis, it is crucial to recognize the potential contributions that young women can make in achieving these goals.

It is widely recognised globally that women bring a different perspective to local government issues, as highlighted by Drage (2001), who asserts that when women support or champion specific causes, they introduce the following elements to the agenda:

- According to Drage's insights, women demonstrate a heightened awareness of social issues and the welfare of their communities. Prioritising concerns such as housing, safety, access to clean water, sanitation, education, the social implications of policies, healthcare, childcare, poverty reduction, and community development. They are dedicated to enhancing the local community's environment, encompassing physical elements, quality of life, harmony in art and culture, and environmental development in the planning of urban growth.
- Women exhibit different priorities and are willing to invest time in addressing family matters and combating abuse against women and children, which some men may consider insignificant.
- Women advocate for a shift toward a more democratic and transparent form of governance, aiming to counter the confrontational and occasionally unethical perception of politics (Drage, 2001).

Numerous barriers confront women due to deeply ingrained social, cultural, and economic factors rooted in patriarchal systems prevalent across societies worldwide (UNDP, 2015). Women from lower socio-economic backgrounds are often marginalised from participating in local government processes that directly impact them, resulting in a scenario where most participating women originate from privileged social classes and possess access to resources (UNDP, 2015). At an international level, women with access to resources, be it financial,

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physical infrastructure, or social networks, are better positioned to advance their agendas, given their capacity to allocate time, the luxury to engage, and the ability to have their voices heard on issues that may be unfamiliar to others, thereby exemplifying their empowerment in their spheres of influence.

The social, cultural, and economic barriers confronting women globally are deeply entrenched in patriarchal societies. Women from lower socio-economic backgrounds are often marginalised from participating in local government processes, while those who do participate typically hail from more privileged social classes with higher incomes, enhanced education, and stronger social connections. Internationally, women with access to resources such as financial means, physical infrastructure, and social networks are better equipped to advocate for their agendas and have their voices heard. This advantage stems from their capacity to allocate time, engage in advocacy, and articulate issues that may not be familiar to others.

Drage (2001) also contends that despite possessing constitutional rights, women are not viewed as equals, often being closely associated with reproductive and domestic responsibilities, while their involvement in politics and community affairs is considered unsuitable and improper. Numerous obstacles, including cultural and traditional beliefs favouring male superiority, religious influences, political instability, violence, financial constraints, heavy workloads, and limited opportunities, impose restrictions and hinder women in many countries. Furthermore, entrenched gender stereotypes and social attitudes that constrain women curtail their ability to participate in local government issues and processes.

Many women have also lost hope in local government across the world because of country-specific issues like corruption, discrimination, sexism and other issues that affect only women on a daily basis. According to Down (2008), women have given up on using municipal local government to bring about or enact change because they believe they can be more successful and have more significant influence in domains outside municipal local government procedures. Their views need to be adequately reflected in the municipal local government system, and they frequently have their opinions ignored while policies are discussed and decided on.

Roads and infrastructure typically constitute the primary concerns of municipal governments, often overshadowing social and community initiatives that hold significant importance for

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women and their families. Consequently, women, in general, harbour feelings of frustration and disillusionment with local government. Local government mandates exhibit diversity across the globe, but a recurring theme in many local government systems is the pervasive disillusionment stemming from high levels of corruption. Furthermore, inconsistencies arise following local elections as political parties' mandates frequently undergo abrupt changes. This disillusionment is deepened by the perception of tokenism experienced by voters during election campaigns, where politicians are perceived to prioritise their party agenda over the people's agenda, thus undermining the confidence and trust of the electorate in local government.

2.3 Broad universal factors hampering the participation of women

Gender equality research consistently identifies several global factors that impede the participation of young women and women in general in local government public engagement processes. A critical issue is an expectation for women to fulfil multiple roles at home and within the community, leading to an uneven distribution of workload across domestic, community, and work environments. This disparity is globally linked to entrenched gender stereotypes and societal attitudes that confine and prescribe women's roles in society.

According to Down (2008), women's involvement in local government public participation processes is obstructed by "systematic discrimination," which is often covert or, in certain cases, deliberate and may not be readily apparent. Instead, it is deeply ingrained in the institutional rules and practices of politics, leading to discrimination against women and other marginalised groups. This systemic bias restricts these individuals and groups from enjoying the same advantages and treatment as other participants, erecting barriers to equitable opportunities in public participation processes. Additionally, it is frequently observed that local government councils fail to establish processes (such as policies or strategies) to ensure the active engagement of young people, specifically concerning service delivery issues that affect them, be it a clinic or the construction of a road. Gender equality research shows that there are many consistent threads worldwide regarding what hampers or keeps young women and women in general from participating in local government public participation processes. One of the most critical issues is that women are often expected to play multiple roles at home and in the community. This means that the workload in the domestic, community, and world of work (employment) is not equally distributed. This globally is linked to entrenched gender stereotypes and social mindsets that restrict and dictate the role of women in society.

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2.4 Key concepts

2.4.1. Local government in South Africa

South Africa's local government is comprised of local, district, and metro municipal councils (municipalities). Each municipality has its council, where decisions are made, and municipal officials and staff are employed to implement the municipality's work. South Africa has 278 municipalities – 44 district municipalities, 226 local municipalities and eight (8) metropolitan municipalities.

A metropolitan municipality is a municipality that is mandated to perform all functions of local government for a particular city, and this is different to municipalities in rural areas where their local government functions are divided across local or district municipalities. South Africa has eight (8) metropolitan municipalities – see *Table 1* below:

Table 1: Breakdown of Metropolitan municipalities in South Africa with gender disaggregated dates of voter registration statistics and ward councillor statistics

Province	**Name**	**Gender disaggregated data**			
		Voter registration statistics (male versus female)		Ward councillor statistics	
		Male	Female	Male	Female
Eastern Cape	Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality	43.26%	56.74%	58% (29)	42% (21)
	Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality	44.16%	55.84%	82.76% (48)	17.2% (10)
Western Cape	City of Cape Town Metropolitan Municipality	43.97%	56.03%	65.18% (73)	34.82% (39)
Gauteng	City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality	47.29%	52.71%	65.91% (87)	34.09% (45)

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Province	Name	Gender disaggregated data			
		Voter registration statistics (male versus female)		Ward councillor statistics	
		Male	Female	Male	Female
	City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality	46.54%	53.46%	68.93% (71)	31.07% (32)
	Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality	48.58%	51.42%	69.09% (76)	30.91% (34)
KwaZulu Natal	eThekwini Metropolitan Municipality	45.56%	54.44%	78.85% (82)	21.15% (22)
Free State	Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality	44.29%	55.71%	65.96% (31)	34.04% (16)

Table 1 provides a gender-disaggregated breakdown of voter registration statistics per metropolitan municipality as of October 2023 and a breakdown of the number of female versus male ward councillors.

In South Africa, elections are conducted for municipal councils, provincial legislatures and the National Assembly. Municipal elections are held two years after national and provincial elections, which are held every five years. Wards choose individual council members in addition to those chosen from party lists under the mixed-member system used for municipal councils.

Every South African citizen who is eighteen years of age or older is eligible to vote in National Assembly elections, including (as of the 2014 election) those who live abroad. Only citizens of the province or municipality are eligible to vote in elections for municipal councils or provincial legislatures. SA had a once-off voter registration process that is managed by the Electoral Commission of South Africa, an autonomous organisation created by the Constitution, which oversees all elections.

The statistics above clearly show that across all of the five (5) provinces with metropolitan municipalities, the number of registered female voters is higher than that of male voters.

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However, the number of male ward councillors in the municipalities is much higher than that of female ward councillors.

Regrettably, according to Masinga (2021), men are now the gatekeepers for nearly anything that members of marginalised groups choose to participate in. This implies that a masculine group has the right to decide how the other group will be treated. Men are free to choose whether or not they want to listen to, support, defend, or advocate for other groups. Also, they have the will to control, mistreat, and ignore other people. Young people have frequently been stigmatised as being too impressionable or immature to participate in "serious" political issues in an effort to marginalise the younger generation. In terms of duty for handling public affairs, men or father figures have assumed a central role. These are broad societal challenges that reach beyond the confines of the home to the community. Men have a great deal of responsibility in this regard because women, children and young people are present in both public and private settings, but men tend to ignore them.

Research on the political development and involvement of young people reveals a gender disparity in political engagement, with men demonstrating a greater interest in political issues and political activism than women. Nevertheless, the majority of voters are women (Bomela, 2021).

Local government becomes the first ‘responder’ in times of crisis (Nzewi, 2021). Therefore, each municipality has its own Integrated Development Plan (IDP) that must be shared with and informed by the public, i.e., the communities it serves. According to McEwan (2006), integrated development planning aims to achieve participatory and developmental local government. To do this, various departments must link their budgets, plans, audits of resources, performance monitoring, and community consultations in a cooperative governance process. Citizens in South Africa understand local government’s mandate as providing services like roads and infrastructure, transport, local economic development, water, sewerage and waste management, health facilities, and provision of land and early childhood development (ECD) facilities to communities. Based on the IDP’s purpose and the beneficiaries of the objectives linked to IDPs, communities must be informed of these plans. Many government organisations use "citizen-oriented management approaches," which strongly emphasise accountability, partnerships between communities and government structures, and community participation—especially for those frequently marginalised by poverty and gender (McEwan, 2006).

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If the goal of efficient local government is to get more people involved in decisions that impact their lives, then meaningful representation of all societal segments—including women—must be ensured. Women must, therefore, play a political role in local government (Rameez, 2018). The roads constructed by municipalities directly impact women, as they rely on these routes for commuting to work and school using the public transport system. Furthermore, they utilise these roads to access local government clinics and community meetings. Many young female entrepreneurs seek funding and support from local government to establish and sustain their community businesses. Young women frequently visit clinics, including the youth-friendly ones, to obtain contraceptives and partake in various outreach initiatives aimed at fostering their involvement and inclusion in community projects tailored to young people. Additionally, young teenage mothers make use of the affordable ECD centres in their local community spaces to ensure the safety of their children while they are at work or school.

Despite the formal and controlled nature of public engagement, Williams (2007) believes that local municipal elections provide a vital kind of community participation. While individuals' ability to participate is restricted by time, place, and a lack of infrastructure, community involvement is important and should not be undervalued because it helps to "bring government closer to the public." Participation venues are important not only for encouraging tokenistic behaviour but also for ensuring that participation is free from manipulation and red tape. It should be acceptable for the general public to debate and consider difficulties as they see fit. Their real-life experiences shouldn't be edited or rewritten to fit a story that differs from the public's. Moreover, voting and communal areas are essential when they address the demands of the general populace. The government should employ community voices and the lived experiences of the people to change current plans and eliminate those that do not aim to benefit the people as a whole. During elections, local governments can leverage community voices to impact policy (Williams, 2007).

McEwan (2006) raises the point that if the definition of good governance is understood to mean that local government must consult with communities before making decisions and support their rights and obligations to self-govern through the established procedures and mechanisms, then a more radical form of governance would emerge and become well-known. In light of the various service delivery protests South Africa as a country annually sees, a radical version of governance is required, focusing on engaging citizens first before giving them what the

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government think they need. In the context of women in South Africa, ways in which women can access power and resources at the local level and their lived experiences of citizenship are still poorly understood, especially about the majority of women still marginalised by the legacies of apartheid (McEwan, 2006). Therefore, women face multiple barriers to being included in decision-making and participation in government processes.

2.4.2 Civic and political participation at the local government level

Any community cannot consider itself ‘free and fair’ if the particular focus is not placed on ensuring that the voices of the women of that community are heard and included. Often, women’s civic participation is limited to volunteerism, community service, and non-profit or advocacy work (Lean et al., 2021), which often limits women, especially young women, when it comes to participating in processes that are crucial to their development as individuals and as citizens of a broader community. Therefore, policies and strategies to include women’s civic and political participation must be prioritised, especially at the local government level, the level closest to the people where issues on the ground affect them daily.

According to Lean, Eckert, Jun, Gerring and Lacouture (2021), voting, campaigning and running for office are all examples of political involvement, and women are frequently "recruited" primarily for their voices in local campaigning and voting. Based on this, targeted public policies or social programmes should be designed to enhance opportunities for women’s participation and single out women as beneficiaries (Lean et al., 2021); women should not only be seen as beneficiaries of local government interventions but as participants.

Rameez (2018) writes that if the goal of efficient local government is to get more people involved in decisions that impact their lives, then meaningful representation of all societal segments—including women—must be ensured. Women must, therefore, play a political role in local government, yet ironically, we find that women's political participation ends only with voting in many cases. It is impossible to overstate the significance of women actively participating in politics in democratic societies. In the overall aim of collectively ensuring accountability, legitimacy, responsiveness, transparency, and accountability of the political system at all levels of government, women's political engagement often (Kasa, 2015; Kasamo, 2012) and the local government level, values like ensures transparency, accountability, legitimacy, and responsiveness cannot be absent as it raises mistrust among citizens.

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The relationship between civic organisations and local government is problematic and seems to hinder local socio-economic development processes as the local government often does not consult civic structures, which represent a large number of community members and especially women, and does not recognise the role of CBOs, which are often accused of being anti-development (McEwan, 2006). Even where municipalities deliver services in communities, more is needed to indicate community participation. Research shows that the government is disempowering women by making women recipients of and not active participants in the development of their communities through the various interventions offered by local government as articulated in the IDPs and the manifesto of the ruling local government council parties.

Oyesomi, Salawu and Olorunyomi (2017) determine the three stages of political engagement: spectator, transitional, and gladiatorial. Essential activities for onlookers include casting a ballot, starting a public debate, trying to persuade fellow people to vote a specific way or for a specific political party, donning a party badge, or flaunting a party sticker. At the gladiatorial level, actions include holding public or party office, soliciting or appealing for party funds, attending caucus or strategy meetings, and providing time or other resources. At the transitional level, actions include attending political meetings or rallies, making some monetary contribution to campaigns, and hiring a political leader or public official. What is quite interesting about this is that at the local government level, political parties acquire the participation of women at the spectator and transitional levels in light of the benefits to the political parties. At the gladiatorial level, men are often voted into political positions at the councils, as highlighted in Table 1.

2.4.3 Young people's participation

Enaifoghe and Dlamini (2021) argue that young people are typically left out of or occasionally ignored when running for office and participating in decision-making. Because of this, politics is often seen as a domain for men with political experience, whereas women are frequently at a disadvantage when it comes to gaining political experience that will enable them to run for office. Therefore, the narrative needs to change around when and how young people and, more specifically, young women are included in all public participation processes across all spheres of government. Mhlongo (2016) contends that one of the biggest challenges facing modern democracies is the growing disengagement of citizens from state politics. The state's inability

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to provide enough platforms to promote citizens' meaningful participation in policymaking is typically the leading cause of non-participation.

Phawasa (2009) summarises a critical study of the current South African stance on youth as follows:

- Because they continue to face poverty, unemployment, and other hardships as a result of the current system (post-apartheid), young people are perceived as "victims" because their efforts and sacrifices for liberation are not as valued.
- Youth are perceived as "saboteurs" because they are seen as possible threats to the stability of the country and, as such, must be subjugated or assimilated into the ideology of the regime in the sense that they were instrumental in the downfall of apartheid. As such, they may pose a threat to the current system.
- Youth are seen as a source of "national pride." The claim made here is that because they led the liberation movement and were crucial to the overthrow of apartheid, they needed assistance and interventions in order for the country to advance.

Even if there is room for disagreement, Phawasa's summary helps paint a picture of how youth are currently perceived in South Africa in specific contexts, particularly with post-apartheid narratives. According to this analysis, young people are seen as resources and assets who positively influence community decisions; however, this could be a cause for debate in the context of young women.

Misunderstandings about the definition of "youth participation" can lead to significant errors in practice and policy. It should be highlighted that most articles and discussions concerning youth involvement in South Africa centre on "political" involvement instead of "social" involvement. When we think of "youth participation," we frequently associate it with the actions of political wings, which obscures the millions of young people who deserve a voice. Regardless of their political affiliations, young people's voices are to be heard, which is what this advocates for. It is clear that not all young women want to be involved in politics, but that does not give anyone the right to have their voices excluded.

Mhlongo (2016) writes that for participation to be meaningful, it is also necessary for the parties involved to have an opportunity to influence policy decisions. This is particularly important for policies that directly affect people's daily lives. The core of "meaningful

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participation" is encapsulated in a definition provided by the World Bank. "A process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives, the decisions, and the resources which affect them" is how the World Bank (1996) defines meaningful participation. Therefore, giving the people the power to influence decision-making on policies that impact them is a quality that cannot be excluded from the concept of "meaningful participation".

2.4.4 Young women's participation

Public participation and engagement are vital to young women's political socialisation as young people bring important ideas and perspectives to public discussions. Levac (2012) argues that two schools of thought form the foundation for intentionally excluding young women from public life. The first holds that all people are free, rational actors and that women's low public engagement results from this. Second, the media's continuous objectification and infantilisation of women are fuelled by the dual narrative of crisis and power that defines contemporary feminism. The first school of thinking appears to be predicated on the idea that women and men are treated equally in society and that there is no gender disparity, unlike the reality that most women across the globe currently live in. Often, women do not have a choice around their reproductive health options. It is also problematic because many young mothers in various communities do not choose to be young mothers but find themselves in such circumstances. Many have experienced the multi-dimensions of poverty that do not give them the choice of when to become mothers. These kinds of exclusions from the *public* enable their exclusion from public participation processes based on the types of details on which these exclusions are built. These exclusions also make it easier for young women to seem or be seen as ignorant.

According to gender studies carried out in South Asia, the main cause of women's lack of political engagement is systemic patriarchy (Bayes & Nayereh, 2012; Mlambo & Kapingura, 2019). It was argued that there is a lack of literature on race and gender in youth political participation in Africa, so it is also crucial for academics to assess the factors that contribute to the gender gap in political participation as well as potential methods and approaches adopted and used. This, therefore, results in a generalisation of the idea that the low voter turnout among youth and their presumed lack of political engagement is caused by the historic political cultures of the African continent.

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According to Levac (2012), youth civic engagement participation is the term used to describe young people's transparent, continuous, and ongoing participation in activities meant to impact their contexts, realities, and public policies. This means that young people need to be interested in critical issues and that if the government wishes to represent the voices and interests of young people, it needs to make a conscious effort to ensure that this is reflected in its policies.

It is, however, becoming more evident that young women are engaging in new forms of politics and creating engagement opportunities that are more responsive to their needs. For example, in the City of Cape Town, many 'women-focused' interventions in social development, like the Women for Change Project and the Provincial Government's Walking Bus Project, exist. Women are engaging in self-advocacy as a form of active citizenship to improve their and their children's conditions (Levac: 2012). It seems that young women are capable of and interested in being engaged in positively affecting their realities and public policies simultaneously.

2.4.5 Understanding the Youth Bulge

Enaifoghe and Dlamini (2021) suggest that many African politicians must know their continents' difficulties. Most developing countries need more young people and citizen participation in politics. This is primarily due to the state's inability to create or build enough platforms that promote the meaningful participation of young people in political processes. Africa faces challenges in modern society equality due to the growing problem of youth under-engagement in politics. The trend above is increasingly evident among South African youth. It has been widely suggested that developing nations like South Africa are experiencing a more pronounced "youth bulge" in collective development. Therefore, there is a need for youth organisations to be involved in South African politics.

Vilakazi and Nene (2021) argue that the government's goal of growing the nation will unavoidably be hampered by non-participation if the state's youth are its future. Prior to 2015, South African youth had not proven their strength in a democratic society, and as a result of their ongoing circumstances, a deep-seated disapproval of the government and its institutions erupted.

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The "South African youth bulge" concept describes a demographic situation in which a sizable fraction of South Africa's population is under the age of thirty. A more significant proportion of people in the younger age groups, especially those between the ages of 15 and 34, characterise this demographic bulge. It is crucial to remember that the "youth bulge" concept is used more widely to characterise comparable demographic trends in many parts of the world, not just South Africa. Youth bulges and other demographic changes are essential in determining a nation's social, economic, and political climate and can impact policy choices.

This tendency has been especially noticeable among young people in developing countries. This is partly because developing countries are more affected by the global phenomenon known as the "youth bulge." However, it should be highlighted that the need for young people to participate in state politics is even more pressing in developing nations because, should the youth bulge trend persist, young people will eventually make up most of the population in most of these countries.

According to Smith (2011), in terms of collective agency, youth do not have a cause; therefore, pro-democratic causes should not be directly associated with them. Rather, reaching adulthood is their shared goal. This complicates the relationship between youth and social change. Youth characteristics like zeal, vigour, and inventiveness, as well as their social duties, obligations, and expectations, can contribute to social change provided societies appropriately acknowledge and take into account the potential of youth as a catalyst for their political development. The stigmatisation of young people as belonging to a "lost generation" must give way to an appreciation of their potential as members of the "current generation," so long as they are given the opportunity to participate in political decision-making and have a positive impact on their communities.

The Youth Lab and the Institute of Security Studies (ISS) conducted research that shows that concerns related to corruption, crime rates, and substance abuse, as well as job possibilities and free or high-quality education, are major determinants of youth voting intentions.

Bodede (2021) writes that in order for there to be a representative political system, people of all ages must be involved. The remaining groups in the political system have little to no influence over decisions that affect the younger groups that are excluded when youth and young people are excluded from it. Increasing youth participation in politics can bring about change

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and inject new, fresh thoughts and ideas into political processes in South Africa. Equal rights for men and women must be granted, and youth involvement must be gender-sensitive and egalitarian. Barriers affecting young women on a social, economic, and cultural level must be eliminated.

With youth making up a sizable population, South Africa has seen a youth bulge trend similar to most emerging countries. This has put the government under pressure to create policies supporting youth development and participation.

2.5 Conclusion

The literature review sets the stage for us to understand holistically a few of the significant gaps that advocate for the participation of women in the civic participation process. The universal examples and experiences from women worldwide reinforce the importance of young women's participation. As much as women's contexts and experiences differ, gender equality is still a universal barrier that needs to be addressed, as the literature clearly shows that this cuts across all spheres of government.

The design and functioning of local government in South Africa is also meant to enable civic participation. However, the focus is more on electioneering and prioritising participation mainly for political gain or during local and national elections. Issues of good governance also advocate for the inclusion of community citizens right at the start of processes and not as an add-on when decisions meant to be owned by communities have already been made. There is a body of research on the 'softer issues' that affect young women, but not the core political matters that affect their livelihoods, safety and overall future as citizens within South Africa.

Given the implications it presents for the country, South Africa's youth bulge must be considered and planned around. Therefore, policies and programmes must be prioritised, but even more so, the voices of women who will 'benefit' from these interventions. Therefore, they must be taken along to ensure relevance and value for money.

The literature review highlights the implications of not ensuring the participation of young women in communities. Statistics show that more women are registered as voters, yet they are still in the minority regarding decision-making. There are still more male ward councillors who

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will not ensure that women's issues are prioritised like women would. There are dire consequences of low participation levels for communities if women are not prioritised and not seen as the only token.

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Chapter 3: Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the theoretical framework to justify and contextualise my research study. This research used the People-Centred Development (PCD) Theory to explain and analyse the participation levels of young women aged 18 – 25 in Cape Town's public participation processes.

The People-Centred Approach was initially developed by the British psychologist Dr Carl Rogers, and he used this approach for his psychotherapy and counselling work during the 1940s and 1960s. His approach was radical because it changed the therapeutic relationship by reversing the power dynamic from the therapist to the client, emphasising empathy and unconditional positive regard, and putting the client's subjective experience and self-actualisation front and centre. Although it was once viewed with doubt and opposition, it has subsequently developed into a fundamental and well-respected method in psychotherapy. Although initially only used in psychotherapy, Rogers and his colleagues also started using the approach in other areas like teaching, management and conflict resolution.

People-centred development (PCD) strongly emphasises the active involvement and empowerment of people and communities in the formulation and execution of development programmes. It is based on the idea that the needs, goals, and capacities of the people development initiatives are meant to assist should take precedence.

From the 1980s, various humanists started using PCD as an approach to international development, emphasising the importance of improving local communities and encouraging local communities to take ownership and participate in decision-making processes. Schenck and Louw (1995) note that people-centred views of communities strongly emphasise individuals, their attributes, their interconnectedness, and their interactions without undervaluing their actual physical communities. Because of this, every community is distinct in its manner. Based on this, the community's people are at the heart of all interactions relating to them. Schenck and Louw (1995) go on to say that the "people-centred paradigm" shifts focus from rigid, goal-oriented, and strict models and strategies to more flexible, process-directed approaches to development or methods of working to support the process that take into account

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the context of the community and the people who make up those communities, so although the outcome is essential, the process is more important because the focus should be on the people.

According to PCD theory, development is about more than just increasing economic growth; it is also about improving human well-being, lowering inequality, and ensuring that the people who are supposed to gain from development initiatives are driving them. It is a comprehensive and collaborative method that questions established top-down development strategies favouring more sustainable and inclusive methods.

The chapter is organized to thoroughly examine the main concepts of the PCD theory and to briefly discuss its strengths and weaknesses in relation to the research objectives. It also looks into the key factors that affect the participation of young women at the local level, particularly in relation to activism through social media. The chapter addresses issues such as the disempowerment of young people due to their exclusion from policy-making processes, their intentional inclusion as tokens for electioneering, and the review of structural issues in the context of local government structures and mechanisms. Although this research focuses on the PCD theory, it also considers Sherry Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation and David Korten perspective on the PCD Theory.

3.2 Main theoretical concepts

3.2.1. Participation

Participation, the central tenant of the PCD theory used in this study, is about inclusivity. Mansuri and Rao (2004) stress that the active and intentional involvement of members of a precisely defined community in at least some aspects of project initiation, conceptualisation, design, and implementation is the foundation of community-based development initiatives. Incorporating local expertise into the project's decision-making processes is a key goal, ensuring that everyone's voice is heard and valued. Therefore, the voices of young women must be addressed when processes and decisions will affect them at the local government level. Encouraging everyone who resides within a municipal boundary to participate in municipal public participation processes is a way of showing respect and inclusivity.

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Schenck and Louw (1995) also say that avoiding confusing the notion of participation with involvement is essential. It is not about involving the community in what we believe they should participate in or in determining how and who should participate in the program we offer; thus, this should not be understood as essentially young people should be involved from the start of any public participation processes, i.e. they should first participate and then become involved.

Regarding the relationship between participation and gender equality in PCD theory, gender equality is a core element of participation. Schenck and Louw (1995) suggest that should community citizens' empowerment be achieved, this needs their full and active participation and, most importantly, for external stakeholders working with the communities/ communities to trust their skills and abilities. In this context, it is based on the premise that local government should enable young women to participate equally in all processes related to their development and community to build self-reliant and sustainable communities.

3.2.2 Empowerment

In the South African context, Enaifoghe and Dlamini (2021) argue that youth policies need more empowerment to encourage responsible and dedicated decision-making at local and national levels. The current focus on youth disengagement, lack of political opportunities, and empowerment contributes to underdevelopment issues in African politics today. Many scholars believe that "empowering Africa's youth" is one of the continent's most significant issues. Despite some African countries experiencing economic prosperity to some extent, youth empowerment in Africa is currently in a state of crisis.

Kosciulek (2020) writes that redefining what constitutes beneficial and significant young involvement and participation inside and via policymaking processes is vital, as is moving away from tokenistic approaches, especially in Africa. Most of the literature and research on meaningful involvement is written by people outside the continent, even though it still needs improvement. African policymakers must consider the fact that youth are significant stakeholders and ensure that their needs, vulnerabilities, rights, and agency are represented in the policies themselves and the procedures that precede the final policymaking processes. From the literature review, many of the examples cited to express or raise the voices of young people are from outside of the African continent. It is also very clear from the literature that in many

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examples of youth participation in policy-making processes, youth were included as tokens, and women were often included.

Abdou and Skalli (2014) conducted a study on Egyptian youth-led civil society organisations. They discovered that despite differences in class, gender, religion, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, young people's personalised embodied experiences of marginalisation and exclusion not only fuelled and ignited their revolutionary spirit but also brought them together against and around the sources of their marginalisation and exclusion. These Egyptian youth have mobilised themselves for collective action with the aim of achieving the changes they wanted to see.

3.3. Strengths of PCD Theory

Schenck and Louw (1995) list the PCD's many essential advantages, such as its emphasis on people over goods and more regard for the contributions of community members. This theory can significantly contribute to our understanding of the importance of the people who use the infrastructure that local governments provide, as one of their primary missions is to provide community infrastructure.

The PCD theory highlights the importance of participation by emphasising that all processes must be participatory. The philosophy also promotes the idea that all procedures must be sustainable because sustainability is essential and leads to community ownership. PCD theory is noteworthy for its emphasis on process rather than just results; while government actions aim to produce significant results, the journey there is just as vital. Additionally, PCD prioritises Indigenous knowledge as part of participation procedures because it honours Indigenous knowledge or the knowledge of the people who live in the communities.

The study's results reveal that PCD, a key factor in empowerment, has a significant gendered component. This is particularly crucial in the context of African politics, as it ensures that the voices and perspectives of young women are not only heard but also amplified. Ultimately, PCD leads to empowerment, and the local government's goal is to foster independent and powerful communities through its support.

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3.4. Weaknesses of PCD theory

According to Mansuri and Rao (2004), participatory initiatives are inherently political because they are frequently public events with flexible target groups and programme activities. Additionally, local power, authority, and gender relations often strongly influence what these initiatives emulate and reflect. One of the main reasons young women choose to avoid getting involved in public participation is that they feel their involvement is used as publicity stunts and only sought during election times.

Mansuri and Rao (2004) also say that exercising voice and choice can be expensive in some situations. At the most fundamental level, the time commitments necessary for adequate engagement may result in actual or perceived financial losses. Often, local government councils do not plan to engage women timeously, and women's voices are usually an afterthought that has financial implications for the institution because it is left too late. This leads to local government not engaging women because they consider it a cost or women are engaged in a rushed way; they do not get enough women to participate, which leads to fruitless and wasteful expenditure in the context of local government.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FOA) of the United Nations (2004), even when participation is expressly mentioned at the outset of any process as a goal or a concept, it is frequently challenging to implement it effectively. The majority of the time, involvement refers to displaying consultation. Stakeholders from the local community are consulted to obtain some context regarding their inclinations, preferences, and commitment to a particular program, project, or set of activities. They are interviewed to gain insight, understanding, and information to feed into the analysis, providing a diagnostic distinguishing baseline for the project. Often, PCD is used as a facade in already pre-planned processes. Hence, communities are 'engaged' for donors or government departments and institutions to tick that box that asks if they ensured that those communities have participated.

Dooms and Fayoyin (2021) conducted a study engaging young South Africans on the prevailing key governance challenges facing South Africa. According to the study, South African youths articulated five essential lessons:

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1. Engage with the youth at the earliest opportunity to avoid potential blind spots resulting from the exclusion of young voices in initial discussions.
2. Recognise that youths are the authorities in their own lives.
3. Emphasise the importance of representation, acknowledging that a youth's experiences vary based on their age, gender, ethnicity, and locality.
4. Prioritise the voices of young people.
5. The study underscores that offering learning opportunities based on the aforementioned lessons highlights the critical need for young people to be at the core of government strategies, approaches, interventions, and mechanisms. Without their inclusion, their voices remain devoid of genuine issues warranting intervention.

Therefore, based on the core elements of PCD theory, these lessons can be better understood and analysed in the context of the theory.

3.5 Sherry Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation

Although not the framework to be utilised in the study, Sherry Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation (1969) is a theoretical framework used for comprehending the extent of public participation in decision-making, especially in planning and administration. There are eight rungs on the ladder, each rung representing a different level of citizen power and participation. The rungs are grouped into three broad categories, i.e. Non - participation**,** Tokenism**,** and Citizen Power**.**

Below is a summary matrix of what each rung signifies and how it affects communities and its citizens:

	Rungs on ladder	**Broad categories**	**Explanation**
8	Citizen control	Citizen power	These upper rungs stand for true citizen empowerment, in which people actually have power and influence over choices. Citizens have significant influence over decision-making at these levels.
7	Delegated power		
6	Partnership		
5	Placation	Tokenism	While citizens are contacted and educated at these intermediate levels, they are not empowered to decide
4	Consultation		

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	Rungs on ladder	Broad categories	Explanation
3	Informing		or guarantee that their concerns are taken into consideration. Giving them a voice without actually influencing them is known as tokennism.
2	Therapy	Non - participation	These levels, which are at the bottom of the ladder, reflect types of "participation" that do not actually empower citizens; instead, they are frequently intended to manipulate or appease them rather than provide them the ability to influence decisions.
1	Manipulation		

Arnstein's Ladder emphasizes how varying degrees of involvement mirror the power relationships between citizens and authorities. It demonstrates that while lower rungs of the ladder signify symbolic or surface-level involvement, actual participation entails autonomy and power-sharing.

3.6 David Korten's perspective of the People-Centred Development Theory

Prominent development theorist David Korten is most recognized for supporting People-Centred Development Theory. In contrast to more conventional, top-down models of development, his approach places a strong emphasis on the crucial role that individuals play in directing their own development processes.

Below is a summary matrix on the key aspects of Korten's perspective (1980):

Issue	Korten's perspective
1. Focus on Human Well-being	According to Korten, development should focus on raising people's standard of living, especially for those who are poor or excluded. Development should prioritize addressing basic necessities, empowering people and communities, and advancing social justice over economic growth.
2. Participatory Development	Korten promotes grassroots engagement, in which individuals actively participate in recognizing issues, developing solutions, and bringing about change. Instead than having solutions imposed by

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Issue	Korten's perspective
	outside parties, development should be pushed from the bottom up, with local communities taking ownership and management of projects.
3. Empowerment and Capacity Building	Developing the capacities of communities is a key component of people-centred development. This entails enhancing people's capacity for decision-making, planning, and group action in order to meet their needs and goals.
4. Sustainability and Long-term Perspective	Korten emphasizes the significance of sustainability in development, not only for the environment but also for making sure that development benefits and procedures are sustained over time. Developing self-sufficient communities that can maintain advancements without ongoing outside assistance is part of this.
5. Critique of Conventional Development Models	The top-down, growth-oriented methods of conventional development strategies, which frequently put infrastructure and industrial expansion ahead of people's needs, are criticized by Korten. He contends that these approaches frequently support environmental degradation, inequity, and reliance.
6. Transformative Agenda	According to Korten, people-centred development is a component of a larger social revolution that aims to overcome systemic injustices, advance democracy, and create inclusive communities. The institutions and mechanisms that sustain poverty and disempowerment should be questioned and altered by development.
7. Four Generations of Development	• According to Korten's writings, development techniques have evolved across four generations, with people-centred development representing a significant change in the latter generations: • • First Generation: Welfare and relief (short-term assistance to meet urgent needs). • Second generation: Community development (localized development projects) • Third Generation: Development of sustainable systems

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Issue	Korten's perspective
	(systemic and institutional transformation for long-term results). • Fourth Generation: Global transformation and social movements (shifting the global system to put sustainability, justice, and equity first).

By emphasizing local empowerment, participation, and equity, Korten's people-centred approach revolutionized development thinking. His theories push governments, NGOs, and development professionals to reconsider their approaches and see people as change agents rather than just recipients of aid.

Therefore, Korten's People Centred Development Theory is a comprehensive and revolutionary strategy that puts sustainability, empowerment, and human well-being first. It provides an alternative to conventional, growth-focused development models.

3.7. Key factors affecting young women's participation at the local level

3.7.1 Young women's activism and today's social media platforms

According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media comprises a collection of online platforms that build upon the technological and conceptual foundations of Web 2.0, which explains the evolution of the internet over time, characterised by increased user-generated content and enhanced usability for end consumers. These platforms facilitate the creation and dissemination of user-generated content. Manning (2014) further explains that social media represents novel media formats featuring interactive user engagement, distinctly different from traditional media such as newspapers or magazines. Social media platforms enable individuals to create and disseminate content using widely available and scalable publishing technology, fostering the spread of information and facilitating social interaction across geographical boundaries. Moreover, Hernandez (2019) and Chatora (2012) argue that beyond serving as a virtual environment conducive to communication, cooperation, openness, and connectivity among people, one of the most appealing aspects of social media is its democratisation of

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knowledge and information. This democratisation allows young people to both consume and produce information.

Enaifoghe and Dlamini (2021) further explain that young people see using social platforms to participate in political debates as creating new avenues for political activity. According to this perspective, an excellent example of these new kinds of interaction is social media usage during the Arab Spring. The use of social media allowed the youth in Arab countries to overcome and bypass political repression (Enaifoghe and Dlamini, 2021). Nevertheless, a wealth of literature on the subject reveals that rather than viewing youth as a crucial asset in solving governments' problems, society tends to problematise them more frequently than not.

According to Phaswana (2009), this negative perception emerged as many societies grappled with the costs associated with issues such as teenage pregnancy, drug abuse, youth delinquency, and sexually transmitted diseases among young people. Some scholars argue that the media's negative portrayal of youngsters contributes to this perception. Despite being crucial economic drivers of progress and advancement, young people are seldom depicted in positive situations or featured in stories that showcase their achievements.

Khubisa (2021) argues that the digital era has altered society in numerous ways. The manner in which the general public interacts with and participates in politics has drastically changed as a result of the widespread use of new media, particularly social media. The increasing ubiquity of mobile phones and the internet, especially in Africa, can be blamed for this. People are now able to take control of their own destiny and effect change by using social media to "bring about democratic transformation" (Bohler-Muller & Van der Merwe, 2011) at the touch of a button.

According to Cho, Byrne and Pelter (2020), South Africa is one of 11 global economies where people actively use the Internet to seek news. South Africans primarily utilise Facebook and WhatsApp for social media and instant messaging. Graham (2020) also notes that youth in South Africa engage in politics through social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter to voice their opinions, applaud or criticise the government, and address social issues like xenophobia, neighbourhood crime, gender and racial inequality.

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Researchers investigating the relationship between social media and political concerns, particularly among young people, have observed physical, social, and intellectual impacts influenced by the participatory nature of social media platforms. They believe that social media can empower young people by building trust, facilitating civic education, and providing a platform for political expression online.

Until recently, the majority of civic engagement studies focused on online action. Effective and efficient use of a public voice is essential for political activism, discussion, and problem-solving. A "public voice" refers to individuals who can influence others to take action on shared issues relevant to their community. Numerous instances exist where issues impacting women have been highlighted or advocated for through the use of social media platforms. When citizens, particularly women, feel that the justice system has failed them, they use social media platforms to raise awareness about their concerns. For example, the advocacy around Gender-Based Violence (GBV) incidents in Cape Town has garnered significant support and serves as a prime example. These situations have rallied mass support for important matters that require a more widespread public voice.

Mitchell, de Lange, and Moletsane (2018) also suggest that young women, often marginalised due to their age and gender, are more inclined to use social media platforms as cognitive spaces where they can discuss and express their opinions on social, cultural, and political issues that affect them. Due to their sense of exclusion from social, cultural, and political issues that concern them, they are compelled to turn to social media platforms to share their thoughts and viewpoints.

3.7.2 Structural issues

Quick and Bryson (2016) present a view that assuring government accountability and transparency is a widespread push motivation for public participation; furthermore, given the rationale behind local government structures, this ought to be the overarching "cause" or drive for having well-functioning governments and communities that have faith in them. While some forms of public participation entail consideration and consultation, others do not. In these cases, decision-making occurs through mutual learning, discussion, and exchange of ideas rather than through the simple collection of individual interests through voting or other mechanisms. However, the latter has become the preferred method of attempting accountability and transparency in the various spheres of government.

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In the context of local government structures within South Africa, ward committees are used as tools for mobilisation and engagement at the local government level. Hicks (2011) writes that local government councils use ward committees as a vehicle for community participation and mobilisation. The ward councillor chairs ward committees and ideally should be made up of up to ten community citizens representing a diversity of interest' in the ward with women being 'equitably represented'. Most importantly, the ward committees are structures that are meant to be consultative extensions to ward councillors who should essentially assist them with communication and mobilisation interventions and opportunities cannot be given 'powers' as community gatekeepers (Hicks, 2011). Therefore, as much as local ward committees are meant to ensure the inclusion of all kinds of groups in their wards, they do not have a say in how this is done and merely act out on instructions given by the ward councillor.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has established and contextualised why the PCD theory is best suited for this research. At the heart of the PCD theory lies participation. Understanding and advocating for the participation of young women at the local level, this theory is most appropriate for bringing crucial nuances to the forefront, thus enabling the development of better systems and interventions. This will result in the creation of more relevant and practical tools to ensure increased participation of women and youth at the local government level.

Research and scholarly thought also indicate that without youth empowerment, meaningful participation is not possible. The PCD theory, with its focus on empowerment, allows for further exploration and practical application of this concept if used correctly. In the era of social media and the widespread use of these platforms by young people, the PCD Theory provides an opportunity to delve into the concept of virtual participation and envision its potential application in the local government space.

Like any other theory, the PCD has both strengths and weaknesses; the identified weaknesses could have implications despite the many strengths the theory possesses. These weaknesses must be considered within the broader framework and addressed promptly for the theory to achieve the desired outcomes.

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Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology used to conduct the study. This study followed a qualitative research approach. Because the research design is viewed as the blueprint for the comprehensive research study data, the techniques employed were based on or made with consideration of the "four dimensions", as articulated by Terre Blanche, Durrheim, and Painter (2006). These dimensions are 1) the purpose of the research, 2) the theoretical paradigm informing the research, 3) the context or situation within which the research is carried out, and 4) the research techniques employed to collect and analyse data.

Campbell, Greenwood, Prior, Shearer, Walkem, Young, Bywaters, and Walker (2020) noted that in a qualitative study, a small number of purposefully selected samples may be used, with the primary goal being to increase the depth of comprehension of the research study's primary objective rather than its breadth. Given the size of the female population in Cape Town, this approach is best suited. Using qualitative research methodologies, the potential value of the selected participants was more important than the concrete number of interviews. The idea was to provide in-depth insight into why most young women are not participating and to propose solutions that can be presented to the local government as considerations for policy amendments and relevant interventions.

This chapter outlines the research criteria that were undertaken, provides insights into how participants were recruited, the data collection tools used to maximise the data required, and considers all the ethical aspects of undertaking such a study.

4.2. Research philosophy

The researcher utilised an interpretive lens to gain an understanding of the various meanings participants attributed to their experiences at the local government level. The study not only recognised but also celebrated the diversity of the participants' realities, which are socially and subjectively constructed based on their personal experiences related to gender, race, educational levels, and socio-economic status. It was acknowledged that people's specific experiences and cultural backgrounds shaped their interpretations and constructions of reality, highlighting the richness of their perspectives and the multifaceted nature of reality.

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The study aimed to understand the participants' various points of view, acknowledging that their knowledge is derived from their understanding and processes of making sense of the world. Recognition was given to the necessary subjectivity of the researcher and the significant value of participants' opinions and ideas. It emphasised participants' ongoing engagement in the co-creation of knowledge and acknowledged the potential impact of individual stories and experiences that could be triggered during the research; thus, support services were made available.

To mitigate potential biases and improve the validity of the research findings, transparency and reflexivity were maintained throughout the entire research process. Qualitative techniques were utilised, including theme analysis, focus groups, and in-depth interviews.

Active interaction with participants was employed to fully understand the depth and diversity of their experiences and to comprehend their contexts and processes for participating or not participating. The study aims to provide insightful information about young women's participation in local government public participation processes, using a participation lens throughout the research.

4.3 Qualitative Research Methods

According to Terre Blanche, Durrheim, and Painter (2006), qualitative research maintains a cyclical approach to the research study process, and qualitative research design acts as a flexible guide to the execution of the research. Therefore, based on the nature of this particular study, a qualitative method was deemed most appropriate.

As mentioned in the theoretical framework chapter, the study utilised the People-Centered Development (PCD) Theory to address the research question. The PCD theory focuses on issues related to participation, empowerment, sustainability, and social networks. The qualitative tools that were used allowed for an in-depth examination of these concepts as they relate to women, local government, and participation.

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4.4. Sampling

According to Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim (2016), a sample is a subset of a population or universe. For this research study, the sample consisted of the female population in the City of Cape Town Metro, which is crucial to public participation processes and the success of community-level government interventions.

Campbell et al. (2020) emphasise that when it comes to sampling, a study's overarching rationale should incorporate the participant selection approach in line with the envisioned objectives of the study. This strategy was included when participants were selected.

Non-probability sampling techniques were employed for this research study. Non-probability sampling, as defined by Terre et al. (2006), is any sampling method in which the statistical concept of randomness is not used to decide element selection. Because this is a qualitative research study, non-probability sampling was deemed the most appropriate technique. It is helpful when randomisation is not feasible, such as in large populations, but it has several limitations due to the subjective nature of sample selection. Therefore, it could provide a better representation of the population, as in the case of the City of Cape Town Metro (Campbell et al., 2020).

4.4.1. Purposive sampling

The specific method used was purposive sampling based on predetermined characteristics, such as gender, age, and residing in a Metro municipality. According to Dolores and Tongco (2007), a form of non-probability sampling method that works best when studying a particular cultural domain with qualified experts within it is the purposive sample methodology. Although the main participants of the study were young women, this method also benefited the study in terms of engagements with youth development practitioners based on their knowledge.

The purposive sampling technique, also called judgment sampling, involves the intentional selection of informants based on their specific qualities. This non-random technique does not require a predetermined number of informants or underlying ideas. In other words, the researcher determines what information is necessary and only seeks out sources who, due to their experience or knowledge, are able and ready to supply it (Campbell, Greenwood, Prior,

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Shearer, Walkem, Young, Bywaters, and Walker; 2020). Therefore, based on the required information for the study, this technique greatly aided the research process. Campbell, Greenwood, Prior, Shearer, Walkem, Young, Bywaters, and Walker (2020) further suggest that it is crucial to consider the research question when selecting a sampling technique for informant selection. Because this study aims to understand the participation levels of a particular population, the techniques utilised best address the research questions.

Campbell et al. (2020) further explain that purposive sampling techniques avoid random sampling and ensure that particular types of individuals are included in the research study's final sample. The rationale behind using a purposive technique is based on the notion that, in light of the study's goals and objectives, particular types of individuals may have significant and divergent opinions regarding the concepts and problems under investigation, necessitating their inclusion in the sample. The main aims and objectives of this particular study are expected to bring about different and new ideas and views as the research develops and results are produced.

4.5. Research procedure

4.5.1. Target groups

Young women

The research group for this research was comprised of young women between 18 and 25 years old. According to South Africa's National Youth Development Policy 2020 – 2030, youth in SA are classified as 14 – 35 years old; however, for this research, the specific age category of 18 - 25 years old was the primary focus. These young women were residents within the boundaries of the City of Cape Town Metropole and may or may not have participated in the City of Cape Town's public participation processes.

Practitioners

Regarding practitioners, the target group for this research included individuals engaged in interventions with young women aged 18 – 25 years old at the local government level within the City of Cape Town Metro boundaries.

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4.5.2. Sample size

The sample for this study consisted of 23 young women from three (3) communities in the City of Cape Town Metro. Initially, 30 young women were targeted and invited but only 23 fully participated in the interviews and three (3) focus group discussions were held (one in each of the communities).

In terms of the practitioners, ten (10) were initially targeted, but only eight (8) were interviewed. Of the ones recruited, only these age categories were willing to participate

Table 2: The distribution of young women targeted for the study versus those who actually participated

Community	**Number of young women targeted**	**Actual number of young women who participated**	**Age category**
Manenberg	10	8	18 - 25 years old
Mitchells Plain	10	7	18 - 25 years old
Bellville	10	8	18 - 25 years old
TOTAL	**30**	**23**	

Table 2 provides a breakdown of the number of young women who were initially targeted versus the number of young women who were eventually interviewed as part of the study. As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, when participants indicated that they no longer wanted to participate, this decision was respected and supported.

Communities targeted as part of the study

Below is a summary of socio – economic backgrounds of the three communities targeted for the study, i.e. Manenberg, Mitchells Plain and Bellville. The summaries provided is based on the Census 2011 data available on the Statistics South Africa (STATSSA) website, unfortunately the latest Census data is not available as yet.

Manenberg

- According to the census 2011 data, Manenberg had a population of over 61 000 people, of whom 85% were identified as ‘coloured’ and 10% as African.

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- Of this population, 40 452 fell into the 'working age' (15–64) category. Amongst this group, 35% (13 962) were classified as employed, 20% (7 923) as unemployed and 46% (18 567) as 'not economically active.'
- 26% of those aged 20 years and older have completed Grade 12 or higher.
- 64% of the labour force (aged 15 to 64) is employed.
- 61% of households have a monthly income of R3 200 or less and 38% have a monthly income of R1 600 or less.
- 90% of households live in formal dwellings.
- 98% of households have access to piped water in their dwelling or inside their yard.
- 94% of households have access to a flush toilet connected to the public sewer system.
- 99.7% of households have their refuse removed at least once a week.
- 99% of households use electricity for lighting in their dwelling.
- Most households in Manenberg are dependent on government support, via the child support grants, old age pensions, and disability grants.
- In Manenberg there are three high schools and 14 primary schools as well as 27 early childhood development centres. This is besides other government departments, facilities and services. Provincial and government websites also list a number of non-profit organizations (NPOs), including community-based organizations (CBOs) and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in the area.
- Manenberg has a long-standing tradition of vibrant and assertive political and social activism which is ongoing and as varied and colourful as the place itself. From the 1970s into the 1990s, numerous community and civic movements and organizations were established with the aim of improving living conditions. Activism in Manenberg was nurtured in the 1980s at the three high schools in the area.This was a period of intense resistance to the apartheid regime, with high levels of mobilization of local communities through a myriad of local formations.

Bellville

- The population is predominantly white (61%).
- 77% of those aged 20 years and older have completed Grade 12 or higher.
- 93% of the labour force (aged 15 to 64) is employed.
- 19% of households have a monthly income of R3 200 or less.
- 99% of households live in formal dwellings.
- 99.7% of households have access to piped water in their dwelling or inside their yard.

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- 99.5% of households have access to a flush toilet connected to the public sewer system.
- 99% of households have their refuse removed at least once a week.
- 99.6% of households use electricity for lighting in their dwelling.

Mitchells Plain

- Mitchells Plain was developed as a Coloured township by the apartheid government as a response to the housing issues of the 1970s.
- The township planning was laid out in terms of neighbourhood unit concepts with large open spaces and localised public facilities influenced by the political ideologies of the time and standards-based planning.
- According to the 2011 Census, Mitchells Plain's population was 310,485, where the number of households was 67,995. This results in an average household size of 4.57
- The population is predominantly Coloured (91%).
- 35% of those aged 20 years and older have completed Grade 12 or higher.
- 76% of the labour force (aged 15 to 64) is employed.
- 38% of households have a monthly income of R3 200 or less.
- 95% of households live in formal dwellings.
- 99% of households have access to piped water in their dwelling or inside their yard.
- 96% of households have access to a flush toilet connected to the public sewer system.
- 99.5% of households have their refuse removed at least once a week.
- 99% of households use electricity for lighting in their dwelling.

4.5.3. Participation criteria

Nationality

Although the communities that make up the City of Cape Town Metro are very diverse due to the number of migrants residing in SA, the young women who participated in the study had to be South African. Although other nationalities could also attend the focus groups, they would not have been turned away.

Race

All races residing in the City of Cape Town Metro could participate in the study. Therefore, this was prioritised when recruiting participants for the interviews and focus groups.

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Age

The women participating in the study were in the 18 – 25 years age category.

Employment status

The women participating in the study were a mix of school learners, tertiary education students, and employed and unemployed women.

Practitioners

There were no set criteria for the practitioners except that they needed to implement initiatives in the City of Cape Town Metro boundaries targeting young women aged 18 – 25 years.

4.5.4. Approach to making contact with the participants

In my capacity as the researcher for the project, I leveraged my professional networks to approach and engage with young women and practitioners for their participation in the research. The recruitment of participants was carried out through engagement with a range of organisations, forums, and networks, encompassing community-based women's organisations, ward committees, youth forums, high schools, and universities, among others.

4.6. Data collection

Bernard (2002) suggests that in order to improve comprehension of a theoretical framework, data collection is essential in research. Therefore, it is imperative to choose the method of data collection and the source of the data carefully, especially since incorrect data collection cannot be made up for by analysis. Therefore, the data collection tools used for this research study had to ensure that the data would be adequately collected and that the participants' inputs were captured appropriately.

4.6.1 In-depth interviews with young women and youth development practitioners

According to Terre Blanche, Durrheim, and Painter (2006), interviews are multifaceted, serving as both casual conversations akin to the numerous daily discussions we engage in as well as formal professional performances. Given this duality and the anticipated outcomes of the study, the interviews yielded diverse insights into various issues pertinent to the research

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context, aligning closely with the perspectives of the interviewees. While the interviews facilitated dialogues between the interviewee and interviewer, the primary focus was on the interviewee as the main contributor. Consequently, the participants were afforded the freedom to highlight their key concerns, discuss pressing issues, and share their personal experiences. This approach enabled me to gather comprehensive information essential for understanding the motivations behind participation or non-participation in local government public participation processes.

4.6.2 Focus groups with young women

Terre Blanche, Durrheim, and Painter (2006) posit that focus groups, carefully assembled to represent a diverse cross-section of interests and attitudes, are a key component of rigorous research. Their inclusion in our study allowed us to encompass a wide array of themes and considerations. As part of the methodology, focus group discussions were not just a supplement, but an essential element. Their primary goal was to deepen my understanding of why most young women residing in the Cape Town Metro were not participating in the public participation processes, following the interviews with the young women.

The composition and conduct of the focus groups were approached flexibly. I guided the discussions by proposing topics and posing questions in an adaptable manner, with the aim of gathering information on why the young women were not participating and identifying potential measures to ensure their engagement.

Driven by ethical considerations, the study upheld the rights and dignity of the participants throughout the research process. Thus, participation was voluntary, and the conditions for conducting the interviews were established in advance, including the time, date, and location. The well-being and comfort of the young women were prioritised, and support was provided, allowing the participants to end the interview at any point if they wished.

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4.7. Data collection tools

4.7.1 Interview guide

The research employed semi-structured, in-depth interviews featuring a blend of open and closed questions. A predetermined set of questions was formulated to steer the interviews toward the topics outlined in the interview guide. Each interview unfolded at its own pace, independently evolving as young women and practitioners shared their experiences and narratives.

The in-depth interview techniques were guided by an interview schedule designed to explore various aspects pertinent to the research. Both interviews and focus groups were recorded and transcribed, with confidentiality and anonymity assured. The interviewer adhered to the research's objectives, which focused on understanding the levels of participation of young women in civic engagement processes, assessing their willingness to participate, and maintaining continuity with the essential guide to ensure the interviews remained on track.

Flexibility was imperative as the interviews naturally progressed, allowing for an organic conversation. Additionally, youth development practitioners and stakeholders were provided with a letter outlining the research framework and guaranteeing the anonymity and confidentiality of the collected data.

The interview guide presented below was intended to serve as a reference for the interviewer, clarifying and ensuring that the research objectives were upheld throughout the interview process.

Topics/ issues covered/ included the following:

- Understanding the mandate of local government municipalities
- Access to information about the municipal public participation process
- Participation in processes
- Resources
- Information Sharing
- Mediums used to communicate processes
- Service delivery issues

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4.7.2. Data collection apparatus

The interviews and focus groups were recorded using the voice recording feature on an iPhone. Beddall-Hill, Jabbar, and Al Shehri (2011) highlighted the potential value of the iPhone and other smartphone devices for future qualitative social research. Leveraging cell phones and other mobile devices for research purposes has become increasingly common, and the use of my cell phone greatly facilitated this research endeavour. Participants were informed about the use of the device, and I ensured that the voice recorder was deactivated whenever participants requested to speak "off the record" or expressed a desire for privacy.

4.8. Data analysis

According to Bailey (2008), written texts (such as documents or field notes), as well as audio and visual data (such as recordings of focus groups, interviews, or consultations), can be used as data for a qualitative study. Written transcriptions of recordings are made to be thoroughly examined, coded, and paired with analytical notes. However, audible discourse must be represented in written words through reduction, interpretation, and representation to make the written material intelligible and meaningful. Therefore, I transcribed the interviews and focus group data and captured the details as I conducted the interviews and focus group discussions.

Bailey (2008) also writes that the first step in data analysis is representing visible and audible data in written form. This is an interpretive process that requires making decisions. There are numerous ways to transcribe the same data since transcribing decisions are motivated by the methodological presumptions of a given research effort. Researchers must choose the level of transcribing detail needed for a given study and the format for written data representation. Therefore, the interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed and organised using Excel spreadsheets. The qualitative data collected was organised and arranged into emerging and reoccurring themes and then discussed in line with the theoretical framework - and existing empirical literature highlighted in my literature review.

4.9. Reflexivity

Reid, Brown, Smith, Cope and Jamieson (2018) make a distinction between the domains of process ethics (ethics in the course of practice) and procedural ethics (obtaining approval).

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They elaborate further in proposing four spheres to guide thinking: procedural ethics (approval processes), situational ethics (the research context), ethical relationships (dynamics between the researcher and participants), and ethical issues in exiting the study (completion and disseminating findings). They acknowledge that ethics are situational and that ethically sensitive issues occur "at the moment" as the research unfolds. This approach raises awareness around the ongoing, unanticipated challenges that might arise beyond gaining approval for the study and require a high degree of researcher 'reflexivity' in responding ethically. This was an essential consideration before and during the data collection process for this study.

Consideration needed to be given to transparency regarding the researcher's dual role as a City of Cape Town official and as a gender activist. As emphasised by Reid, Brown, Smith, Cope, and Jamieson (2018), the formal application process should not commence until the research's noble objectives are carefully weighed against the interests of the participating researcher, in this case, myself, particularly considering my employment with a municipal council and my advocacy work in gender-related matters.

4.10. Ethical consideration

Wa-Mbaleka (2019) defines *ethics* as the field that analyses morality, ethics, and what is right and wrong, mentioning that moral considerations help qualitative researchers structure their work within moral boundaries. Planning and carrying out research according to the strictest ethical guidelines is a moral duty for qualitative researchers. Additionally, they must minimise any potential danger as much as feasible. This norm needs to be followed throughout the entire study process, not just when it comes to the proposal, as has occasionally been stated informally and as the initiator of this research project. The main aim was to ensure that the highest ethical standards were adhered to in order to protect not only my integrity as the lead researcher but also that of the university and, most importantly, the participants who have trusted me to share their experiences with.

Tracy (2013) suggests that when conducting qualitative research, researchers adhere to three types of ethics: relational, situational, and universal. Situational ethics deals with context-specific ethics because, in qualitative research, contexts vary according to the culture of the target group of participants. Therefore, adjustments need to be made when carrying out the study in order to contextualise it. Relational ethics concerns how the researcher relates to

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individual participants, their culture, worldview, and setting; universal *ethics* can be defined as the type required for all social sciences ethics. Relational ethics are crucial since developing trust with participants is key to gathering reliable data.

The research was carried out in accordance with the ethical standards and guidelines of the University of the Western Cape. Research ethics are essential for safeguarding the well-being of the participants (Terre et al., 2006). As a result, the participants were required to provide their informed consent by signing an attached form, indicating their understanding of the information provided prior to the research and their agreement to the terms and conditions.

Wa-Mbaleka (2019) suggests that the researcher should always try to prepare ahead of time and avoid using coercion. Anytime they want to, research study participants are free to leave the study. If they so want, individuals also have the option to decline to respond to a particular question from an interview or focus group discussion. They can decide what they want and do not feel like sharing for a research study. Qualitative researchers must safeguard the anonymity of their subjects. Issues of privacy, anonymity and confidentiality were adhered to, and pseudonyms, where required, were used. Information and views obtained from the material and research were not changed or exaggerated; an unbiased approach was used when discussing the data.

Ethical clearance was received from the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences and Higher Degrees' committee at the University of the Western Cape.

4.11. Avoidance of harm

Wa-Mbaleka (2019) emphasises the importance of qualitative researchers in protecting participants from harm. To prevent any physical harm related to the research, precautions should be taken. Researchers should also be mindful of emotional strain and arrange counselling support if needed. It is advised not to interfere with participants' religious or cultural beliefs, which are integral to their identities. Careful consideration was given to the location of interviews and focus groups to ensure the safety and well-being of the participants. In cases of emotional stress, referrals for support were made available to the participants. When emotional stress was picked up or occurred, a referral was available to be shared with the participants.

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4.12 Methodological reflections

This section critically evaluates the methodological choices made throughout the research process, aiming to enhance the transparency of the study and highlight the crucial role of the researcher in both data collection and analysis.

Overall, the processes of data collection and analysis were executed effectively. However, several participants in face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions exhibited hesitance in sharing their opinions. To mitigate this reluctance, I emphasized the confidentiality of their responses and adjusted my questioning techniques to create a more comfortable atmosphere for open dialogue.

My previous professional experience in the youth development sector significantly informed my interpretation of various themes during the coding and analysis stages. To safeguard against potential biases stemming from this background, I engaged in regular discussions regarding the coding framework with colleagues and a fellow PhD candidate. This collaborative approach underscored the necessity for vigilance and critical reflection in research methodologies.

As a female researcher employed by the government, I recognized the possibility that participants may alter their responses to align with perceived expectations. In response to this potential bias, I consistently reinforced my role as an unbiased investigator, intent on capturing authentic perspectives. Additionally, I endeavoured to foster a comfortable, non-judgmental environment during data collection, assuring participants that their responses would remain confidential and emphasizing that there were no correct or incorrect answers.

A notable limitation of this study was the overrepresentation of participants from racially marginalized backgrounds, which may constrain the generalizability of the findings. Nevertheless, prioritizing the amplification of young women's voices—regardless of race—yielded rich and nuanced insights into the experiences of the female participants.

Engaging in this research endeavour has deepened my understanding of the complexities inherent in qualitative data analysis and enhanced my ability to navigate the challenges frequently encountered in sensitive research contexts.

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Through a process of critical reflection on the research methodology, I have illuminated the study's methodological rigour and transparency. These reflections underscore the significance of researcher reflexivity in qualitative research, advocating for a more sophisticated and reliable interpretation of the findings.

4.13 Conclusion

The methodology chosen for data collection prioritized high-quality and meaningful data gathering, emphasizing transparency to allow participants to share their experiences for positive change for young women at the local level and within the broader community they inhabit.

This chapter outlines essential procedural factors designed to safeguard the integrity and meaningfulness of the data collection process and delineates my research philosophy as the principal investigator.

The success of the data collection process is central to the prioritization of the participants' needs and understanding of the recruitment and mobilization methods. This chapter provides insight into how young women and practitioners were approached, how they were made to feel at ease during the interview process, and how they were briefed on the study's purpose. Emphasis was placed on demonstrating the protection and prioritization of the participants' integrity and reputation throughout the entire data collection and analysis stages.

Careful planning and meticulous execution of the recruitment and data collection processes are imperative for the successful progression of any research study. Therefore, significant attention was devoted to ensuring adherence to the correct processes to achieve the study's objectives. The various phases and stages of data collection needed to be conducted with precision to ensure that participants recognized the value of their contributions and felt valued by both the researcher and the broader audience that the research would ultimately reach.

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Chapter 5: Data Analysis, Findings and Discussions

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the data that was analysed, and the main research findings gained through the qualitative methodology used to gather the data. The chapter starts by providing summary profiles of the participants – the young women and practitioners - highlighting key factors like their age, birth year, academic qualifications, and employment status.

The chapter also provides a framework for analysis that was used to scrutinise the data collected further. It draws out key themes that can be deduced from the data and provides applicable quotes to concretise some of the framework's elements. Based on the themes in the framework, prominent findings are made based on how the participants' contexts affected their levels of involvement and their willingness/ desire to get involved in public participation processes.

The findings also present additional themes that should be further explored, particularly by the local councils, in order to ensure that citizens maintain confidence in institutions responsible for providing their basic needs in the communities in which they reside.

5.2 Data Presentation

5.2.1 Profile of Participants

Although 30 young women were initially targeted for the interviews, only 23 were interviewed and formed part of the focus groups. In terms of the practitioners, initially, ten were targeted and approached, but eight (8) formed part of the data collection process.

In order to protect the confidentiality and identities of the participants, their names and other personal information, which might help to identify the participants, were not collected.

Table 3: Socio-demographic profiles of the young women interviewed

Participants (23)	Year of birth	Age	Employment status	Educational level
Participant 1	2003	20	Unemployed	High school education
Participant 2	2004	19	Unemployed - learner	Currently in high school

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Participants (23)	Year of birth	Age	Employment status	Educational level
Participant 3	2001	22	Unemployed	High school education
Participant 4	2005	18	Unemployed	Matric
Participant 5	2005	18	Unemployed - learner	Currently in high school
Participant 6	2004	19	Unemployed	Matric
Participant 7	2000	23	Unemployed	Matric
Participant 8	2004	19	Employed	Matric
Participant 9	2004	19	Unemployed	High school education
Participant 10	2004	19	Unemployed	Matric
Participant 11	2005	18	Unemployed	High school education
Participant 12	2002	21	Unemployed - learner	High school education
Participant 13	2000	23	Employed	Matric
Participant 14	1999	24	Unemployed	High school education
Participant 15	2000	23	Unemployed	Matric
Participant 16	2000	23	Unemployed - student	Matric
Participant 17	1999	24	Unemployed - student	Matric
Participant 18	2002	21	Unemployed - student	Matric
Participant 19	1999	24	Unemployed - student	Matric
Participant 20	2000	23	Unemployed – student	Matric
Participant 21	1999	24	Unemployed - student	Matric
Participant 22	2002	21	Unemployed - student	Matric
Participant 23	1998	25	Unemployed - student	Matric

Table 3 provides *the socio-demographic profiles* of the 23 young women aged 18 – 25 years who were interviewed.

From Table 3, it can be noted that 65% of the young women have a Grade 12 qualification, 26% have a lower than a Grade 12 high school qualification, and 9% of the young women are currently school learners (high school). Only 9% (2) of the participants were employed, either full-time or on a contract basis, and 43% of the young women were unemployed and not in school.

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Disaggregated data – number of participants per age:

Table 4: Age disaggregated data of young women interviewed

Age	Number of participants
18	4
19	**5**
20	1
21	3
22	1
23	**5**
24	3
25	1

Table 4 provides a breakdown of the young women interviewed per age. The majority of the young women were aged 18 (four (4) participants, 19 (five (5) participants) and 23 (five (5) participants) years old.

Summary of practitioners interviewed

Table 5: Profile of practitioners interviewed

Practitioner	Year of birth	Age	Gender	Educational level
Practitioner 1	1969	54	Female	University degree
Practitioner 2	1986	37	Female	University degree
Practitioner 3	1967	56	Male	University degree
Practitioner 4	Did not indicate	Did not indicate	Male	University degree
Practitioner 5	1988	35	Female	University degree
Practitioner 6	1989	34	Female	University degree
Practitioner 7	1987	36	Female	University degree
Practitioner 8	1985	38	Male	University degree

Table 5 provides a breakdown of the ages of the practitioners. Notably, only two practitioners fall within the youth age range, as defined by the national young policy, being 35 years old and younger. This significant age gap raises a legitimate concern about their ability to relate to the young people they serve. In terms of their educational levels, all of the practitioners hold university degrees, i.e. a tertiary qualification. This prompts the question of whether all youth

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practitioners should be qualified, or if recognised youth work qualifications should be mandatory to ensure a deep understanding of the needs of young people in communities.

5.3 Findings and Discussion

The research findings are presented in conjunction with the framework for analysis in Table 6.

Table 6: Themes and categories making up the framework of analysis

Theme/ s	**Category**	**Ideas to consider and further explore**
Level of understanding	Role/ function of local government	• Frequency of participation • Issues which trigger participation • Participation capacity and roles • Participation location/ spaces
	What local government public participation processes are	
Level of participation	Low attendance of public and community meetings	Factors influencing willingness to participate and participation rates (e.g. age, education)
	No participation in public processes	
Desire/ willingness to participate	Young women want to participate/ and be engaged.	
Utilisation of tools	Social media is not sufficient due to financial constraints	Tools used to enhance participation, e.g. social media
	'Traditional' tools are preferred.	
Despair over local government and service delivery	Additional findings during data collection processes	On effects of crises on participation outcomes (e.g. COVID-19, economic crises, load shedding, etc.

The study presents and discusses the findings using the analysis framework mentioned above which allows for a comprehensive examination of the emerging themes and the emerging categories. It enables the practical analysis of these themes and categories. Furthermore, the analysis framework generates opportunities for future research and ideas, which can enhance the richness and significance of the findings, ultimately advancing the goals of the study. The findings will also be compared to existing literature, and the analysis framework will aim to validate not only the research findings but also to identify any gaps in the existing literature.

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5.3.1 Summary of overall responses by the participants - young women and practitioners - on the questions asked on the interview schedule

Table 7: Summary of responses by young women and practitioners interviewed

Question	**Response summary**	
	Young women aged 18 – 25	**Practitioners**
Do you know what the functions of local government municipalities are?	Nine (9) out of 23 young women knew the functions of local government (39%)	All of the practitioners understood the functions of local government.
When was the last time you attended a community or public meeting?	Only one (1) out of the 23 young women attended a public/ community meeting (4%)	All of the practitioners attended a community/ public meeting in their lifetime, some as recent as a few months ago.
Have you ever participated in a public participation process, e.g. given feedback on a policy or a buy-law or made comments on the budget?	None (0) of the 23 women ever participated in a public processes at the local government level	One (1) of the eight (8) practitioners had not participated in local government public participation processes.
Do you think that young women want to participate in local government public participation processes?	All of the participants felt that young women want to participate in local government processes.	Two (2) out of the eight (8) practitioners said that they think young women do not want to participate in public participation processes.
Do you think that your municipality is using the correct tools to communicate or advertise government processes	20 of the 23 young women (87%) felt that the municipality using communication tools such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter does not ensure that the target audience is reached	• Practitioners felt that access/ accessibility is an issue • Some tools being used are outdated
Do you have any suggestions for better tools to be used or how the council can market and communicate better?	15 of the 23 young women (65%) felt that the municipality should revert to traditional marketing tools, i.e. leaflets, posters, door-to-door and open field meetings	Practitioners indicated that safe communication spaces are needed and that the municipality should reconsider how it utilises its community centres, community parks, and recreation centres to communicate. The use of TikTok should also be considered, given its growing reach globally and how citizens are using it to raise social awareness.

Table 7 provides a summary of the overall responses by the participants from the questions asked from the interview schedule. In most cases, the responses to questions posed to the young women and practitioners frequently presented completely opposite responses and experiences.

Upon a thorough examination of the empirical data through the framework of Participatory Community Development (PCD) theory, it becomes increasingly apparent that empowering

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young women with a comprehensive understanding of the roles and functions of local governance is pivotal for fostering their active engagement in democratic processes.

Analysing the empirical findings through the lens of participatory principles inherent in PCD theory illuminates the necessity for young women to have a substantive role in local governance to ensure both inclusivity and adequate representation of issues uniquely affecting them. As delineated in Chapter 3, the essence of participation—within the PCD theoretical framework—is fundamentally oriented toward inclusivity. The data reveals a pronounced desire among young women for inclusion, reflecting their aspiration to be both heard and visible within decision-making arenas.

It is imperative that young women are purposefully engaged from the inception of any intervention or initiative. Their initial participation serves as a critical determinant of their empowerment trajectory. The process of involvement must begin with their active engagement, which subsequently transitions into a more substantial participatory role.

The accompanying matrix elucidates the robust correlation between themes emerging from the research and data sources, alongside the fundamental concepts of participation and empowerment articulated in the reviewed literature. This alignment not only underscores the coherence of my analysis but also attests to its empirical reliability within the context of the PCD theoretical framework.

Themes	**Literature review (key concepts)**	**Theoretical and conceptual framework (main concepts)**	**Data sources/ findings (young women and practitioners interviews and focus groups)**
Level of understanding	***Local government in SA***	***Empowerment***	***Levels of understanding***
	Understanding how local government functions	*If citizens are empowered to understanding then they can participate*	*They want to understand the functions of local governments*
Level of participation	***Civic and political participation at the local government level***	***Participation***	***Levels of participation***
	Important to ensure buy-in and ownership of government intervention	*Citizens must not just be involved – but participate before getting involved*	• *Levels of participation varies based on exposure to*

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Themes	Literature review (key concepts)	Theoretical and conceptual framework (main concepts)	Data sources/ findings (young women and practitioners interviews and focus groups)
			local government process and access •
Desire/ willingness to participate	• ***Young people's participation*** • ***Understanding the youth bulge***	***Structural issues***	***Desire/ willingness to participate***
	Young people want to participate but are facing many other social barriers (unemployment, access to education, etc.)	*Systems and processes must be designed to include their participation from the start*	*Want to participate but they face challenges including safety in communities, unemployment, access to financial resources, etc.*
Utilisation of tools		***Social media***	***Utilisation of tools***
		Importance of varying communication platforms become crucial given COVID	*Incorrect tools currently being utilised based on young women's context* *Traditional tools more relevant/ effective*

When examining the understanding of local government municipalities' functions, it was found that less than half of the young women were familiar with these functions, while all of the practitioners possessed a comprehensive understanding of them. Surprisingly, only one of the young women had attended a public or community meeting, whereas all of the practitioners had participated in such meetings at some point in their lives.

Remarkably, none of the young women had engaged in public participation processes, which encompass providing feedback on policies or by-laws and offering comments on the budget. Conversely, only one practitioner had not taken part in local government public participation processes. Interestingly, all participants expressed the view that young women are inclined to participate in local government processes, although two practitioners suggested that young women may not be eager to engage in public participation processes.

A significant portion of the young women believed that the municipality was employing ineffective communication tools, particularly social media platforms such as the sub-council email database, ward committees, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, which they felt were

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failing to reach them or the target audience, including women of all ages and other underrepresented communities. Conversely, practitioners contended that the issue lay in accessibility, as the current tools relied on data/Wi-Fi, smartphones, and social media profiles, which not all young people have access to.

More than half of the young women expressed the opinion that the municipality should return to using traditional marketing tools such as leaflets, posters, door-to-door campaigns, and open field meetings. On the other hand, the practitioners emphasised the need for safe spaces to effectively disseminate information, suggesting that the municipality should reassess the utilisation of its community centres, recreation hubs, libraries, and clinics as access points or spaces for sharing information. Additionally, the practitioners recommended considering and utilising TikTok due to its global reach and the platform's ability for citizens to access information and raise awareness of current issues.

The active participation of citizens at the local level is paramount for local councils to garner support for their service offerings and gain backing for current or future projects. Therefore, the empowerment and enablement of citizens to participate cannot be rushed or underestimated. It is essential to engage citizens through channels that resonate with their circumstances and ensure that they are actively involved in providing feedback when their participation is required. Low levels of community participation will lead to low levels of community buy-in, which will not benefit the individuals residing and operating within those communities, as well as the broader communities.

5.3.2 Level/s of understanding

Role/ function of local government

Based on the information gathered from the young women, it became evident that the majority of the participants were not familiar with the functions or roles of the local council or municipality. Out of the 23 young women, only nine indicated that they understood the functions of local government or the local council. This lack of understanding may suggest that the young women were not fully aware of the local government's public participation processes due to their limited understanding of the role and function of local government.

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The young women's unfamiliarity with the functions of local government has implications for the expected mandate of local government. If citizens are unaware, it is challenging to expect their optimal participation. Schoberlein, Kukutschka, and Wathne (2019) assert that the interaction between the public and governmental bodies is most apparent at the municipal level. Additionally, as this is the level of government where most residents engage with government officials and receive the majority of public services, it plays a fundamental role in ensuring that citizen participation is as visible and noticeable as possible.

The lack of knowledge among participants may be linked to the age categories of the individuals, as many of the 18, 19, and 20-year-olds are currently learners, with a few having recently completed their Grade 12 or high school education. Consequently, their limited understanding could be attributed to their current interests and focus on pursuing their studies. Notably, only Participant Five could confidently state that she knew the functions of local government. According to

Participant 5:

> *The function of local government municipalities is to provide services that residents have problems and struggling with.*

Participants 19 and 20, aged 23 and 24 years old, respectively, were able to clearly articulate what they understood to be the role and functions of local government, and this could be linked to age-given 'priorities' at those ages.

> Participant 19
> *Yes I think the functions of the government municipalities are to take care of the community.*

> Participant 20
> *Local municipalities are responsible for maintenance of roads, drainage systems, maintenance of streetlights, refuse removal. They are responsible for keeping the* ***community*** *neat and tidy and deal with any grievances regarding service delivery.*

The participant's level of understanding could also be linked to their **educational levels** because most in the 22 – 25 age category had a Grade 12 qualification or some form of

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high school education. This could contribute to them having some understanding of the role and function of local councils given that they are either not preoccupied with current schooling/ academic requirements or because they have had to navigate a matter at a local government facility or had to engage their local ward councillors. The views of scholars such as Julianna (2008), Swartz and Arnot (2014), and Mhlomi and Osunkunle (2017) are particularly noteworthy. They argue that lower education levels of young people contribute to their exclusion from political and democratic participation, with citizens' levels of education and schooling being a major determinant of political participation. The current study's findings align with these expert opinions, indicating that educational levels are a contributing factor that affects young women's participation levels in civic activities.

From the few responses (Participants 5, 10, 16, 20) that indicated that they know what the function of local government is, a common word used in their responses is **'communities'**, indicating that there is an understanding that communities should benefit from the local government functions and services. Based on this, the question to be considered is: what kinds of community issues would trigger community participation?

However, in terms of the practitioners' responses to the same question, they could articulate clearly what they understood to be the functions of local government, given their exposure to the context and the work that they do at the local level. With practitioners 2, 4 and 8 articulating their responses clearly. The term 'community' was raised in all their responses, again creating the sense that they understood local government had to be about the people in communities.

According to practitioner 2*, "A municipality must structure and manage its administration, budgeting and planning processes to give priority to the basic needs of the community, and to promote the social and economic development of the* ***community*** *as well as to participate in nation and provincial development programmes".*

> Practitioner 4
> *To prioritise local* ***communities*** *and their needs such as employment and housing. Ensure rollout of development programmes for ECD, People living on the street, People living with disability and seniors*
>
> Practitioner 8

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The functions of Local government is to provide communities with social care, electricity, clean water, provide housing, sanitation. To promote Socio and economic development in our ***communities****.*

5.3.3 Level/ s of participation

The research findings also show that there were **zero to low levels** of attendance of young women at public/community meetings, which inadvertently indicated that there are zero to low levels of participation of young women at the local level in and through their public participation processes. From the responses, only one participant – participant 17 – indicated that she attended a community/ public meeting once in 2016.

The data also shows that there are a range of reasons why young people are unable to/ do not participate in local government processes. Consideration must be given to issues such as access to employment/ funding to get to community engagements, access to safety, linked to the time meetings and how conducive the venue is for the meeting to take place and also general interest in local government processes. Kosciulek (2020) writes that because decision-making places are designed primarily for older working people, young people are still mostly excluded. These venues only sometimes consider the barriers to participation that young people confront, like lack of transportation, event timing, the requirement for study space, or even simple information availability. In inaccessible places, adolescent involvement is frequently restricted to tokenistic or superficial activities that do not foster deeper, ongoing engagement; instead, youth participation is treated as a "tick box" exercise. Again, this indicates that public participation spaces are designed for a particular type of group, not young people. When young women are at the heart of interventions, their constraints must be considered, and attempts must be made to mitigate them.

One of the key factors hampering the young women's participation could be linked to **access to financial resources/ funding** to get to the meetings. The majority of the young women are unemployed, which indicates that should the community meetings require them to acquire any mode of transport to get to the meetings, whether public transport via taxi, bus or e-hailing services versus private vehicle, which will also require petrol funds, this could hamper their attendance. Depending on the context they might find themselves in or the influences they are affected by, as mentioned above, should they receive any kind of funds, it would much rather

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be used for daily needs versus attending a community meeting. The observation above concurs with scholars such as Benkler (2006), Bosch (2013), Poor (2005) and Abubakar (2011), who have argued that youth political engagement often declines as a result of unemployment, poverty, financial restraints, and the ongoing technology divide and the communities that the participants come. Scholars examining the relationship between adolescent involvement and social media use must take into account all of these constraining elements. As Chatora (2012) argues, it is crucial to have a techno-realistic perspective on how social media interacts with the environments in which it is used.

The current digital divide – i.e. the gap between those who have and do not have access to computers and the Internet - should be taken into account when discussing how youth will participate in politics in the future through social media and strategies for overcoming these disparities should be developed. Muller (2022) summarises that the disparities in terms of the digital divide for young people include issues of affordability (if the access is affordable in relation to other basic needs the youth might have), quality of service (if the upload and download speeds sufficient for the local needs of Internet users and relevance (does the youth have the necessary skills and technologies and is the information available in the local language. These are basic matters that should be considered in order for young people to participate freely, and local councils should prioritise enabling access for young people, particularly based on the communities that the communities serve.

Another factor that could lead to low levels of participation could be issues of **safety in communities, particularly at night**. A number of participants indicated that it is not safe for them to move around their communities at night given the high levels of crime like robberies, sexual assault and shootings related to gangsterism. It is particularly not safe for women to walk around in their communities at night as they could be victims of rape or any other kind of sexual assault. According to Leoschut and Kafaar (2017), many young people in South Africa experience violence in the communities in which they live. Kaminer et al. (2013) stated that community violence differs from other social problems since it is interpersonal violence that is experienced outside the home and continues to have negative socio-economic consequences for the community members. Research shows that 98.9% of young people on the Cape Flats have witnessed violence, and 40.1% have been victims of violence in their community. Kinnes (2017) asserts that the Cape Flats community is one of the oldest townships characterised by extremely high levels of violent behaviour committed by gang

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members in the area. Therefore, should the local councils be hosting their meetings at night, the attendance of young women would be affected, given safety issues in communities. Through the focus group discussions, it became apparent that issues of safety in communities were a major concern for young women.

Another key factor that could negatively affect the attendance of young women is **information sharing/ communication around** meetings and engagements. If participants are not made aware of meetings taking place, this will hamper their attendance, as indicated by participants 12 and 21, respectively.

> Participants 12
> *I never attend any public or community meeting because I'm never aware that there is one*

> Participants 21
> *I have never attended a meeting because I don't know where and when they take place.*

From the responses above, there seems to be a sense that the young women feel that they are not 'involved', 'not spoken to about meetings', they are 'not aware', and 'don't know where and when it is going to take place'. For example, participant 22 indicated she had only been to a public meeting that a religious organisation organised, and her main reasons for attending the meeting were because the organisation continuously advertised the meeting and that she trusted the religious organisation more than her ward councillor. This indicates that there is very little knowledge as to when meetings are planned and actually take place.

However, the practitioner has attended and participated in public/ community meetings more frequently, although his attendance is linked to his job description.

> Practitioner 1
> *Attended a meeting 10 August 2023.*
> *On average, this practitioner attends 2 or 3 public meeting a week.*

> Practitioner 6

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My last community meeting was last year 2022 when I accompanied my aunt to fetch her title deed. The meeting was organised by the City of Cape Town's Human Settlements Department in partnership with the Public Participation office. The Human Settlements had come out into the community of Mfuleni to hand-out title deeds to home owners whose houses were built between 2016 and 2017.

From Practitioner 6's response, we can infer that although they attended a non-work meeting in 2022, they have an understanding of how the City of Cape Town's public participation processes work.

5.3.4 Desire/ willingness to participate

The data collected, however, does indicate that the young women want to participate, be included, and be engaged in the issues that affect them at the local level. They see the benefits of participating, particularly how it can benefit their communities and other citizens. The idea of their voices being heard and speaking up on behalf of others came up as a theme in the interview quite often, as articulated by participants 2, 4 and 16. They see the benefits that participation could have for their children and future generations, as well as their role in ensuring not only that their own agendas are pushed but also that of the collective community.

Participant 2

Yes, I really think young women want to participate in this (public participation processes of the local council) because like myself I would like to speak up for my kids in the future.

Participant 4

Yes, I would like to participate in local processes and to speak on behalf of those who are afraid of being heard

Participant 16

Yes, I would like to and I believe that others would like to do the same too, as the laws passed by the City of Cate Town involve us all. I would like to think we, as young women, should have a say in what will affect us and the generations to come.

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This should be seen as an opportunity by the local council to prioritise the involvement of women given the benefits their participation could have not only on the individuals but also the future generations who will continue to reside in those communities. This will secure further and future support for the political parties servicing those communities, particularly during election times.

However, participant 9 refers to the problematic nature of the government's 'empty promises'. As shown in the literature review chapter, communities are disillusioned by what they consider to be the government's non-performance and empty promises. Participant 9 captures this mood:

> *Participant 9*
> *In my opinion, I would say no, because of the constant empty promises and young women barely know if there are things being done in the community because normally you would just see 'oh there's a new clinic or school.*

Thus, even though the majority of young women wish to take part, the local government needs to make an effort to dispel this kind of mistrust in order to guarantee participation. As highlighted in the literature review chapter as well, Participant 20 raised the fact that frequently, there is an assumption that young people only want to participate if they are interested in politics or affiliated with a political party.

> *Participant 20*
> *I think that if we were made more aware of these processes, then yes. The younger generation is about change, but I do think that awareness is not there. I do also think that a lot of people are under the impression that you need to be part or interested in politics to attend these meetings*

Practitioners

The responses indicate that practitioners mostly felt that young women want to participate in processes but raised concerns around restrictions and accessibility, particularly safety (Practitioner 1), as indicated in the text above.

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Practitioner 1

Yes, they want to participate in processes. *However, they feel restricted based on the times of community meetings being held at night.*

What does become apparent in the practitioners' responses is the need to enable and equip young women to understand their voices and use them appropriately to push for change. As the ones responsible for working with you, the practitioners recognise that more capacity building and empowerment are required for young women to participate optimally.

Practitioner 8

Yes, I think so. They need people that can encourage them to participate and educate them about the importance of playing their part in local government.

Current research shows that there are different ways in which women can be mobilised to participate by appealing to their interwoven identities. Lean et al. (2021) discuss women's multiple identities as members of political parties, religious organisations, economic classes, ethnic groups, sexual orientations, and marital statuses, among other identity categories, and this affects women's mobilisation and activism.

5.3.5 Utilisation of tools

Interestingly, the young women all mentioned that social media is perhaps not the ideal tool to communicate with them about and around local government processes and/or public meetings. This was quite contrary to what the literature shows regarding the preference and power of social media tools, particularly post-COVID-19 and the move to virtual platforms. It seems that information is not filtering down to young women, as articulated by participants 2, 10 and 16.

Participant 2

No, they are not using the correct tools. However, if they do, more young people would be willing to listen to them.

Participant 10

No, because not all young people are reading newspapers and pamphlets.

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Participant 16

I do not think so. Many municipal happenings are heard of in the news many weeks after the event. What is happening right now is not communicated, or maybe it is not reaching us.

Young people in Cape Town want the government to use social media platforms to engage the government. However, access to resources like cell phones, laptops and tablets is not possible due to high poverty levels in the communities that local government services. Participation levels are negatively affected by access constraints. For example, the youth who do not have access to a phone cannot participate in online activities. Bodede (2021) considers that young people, sometimes known as 'digital natives,' are raised with an innate tendency to use Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for tasks. However, compared to those not proficient with ICT, South African youngsters generally exhibit lower confidence when using ICT to complete activities. The introduction of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) and the changes in social interactions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic will necessitate methodical and careful adjustments to electioneering practices. These adjustments could include the development of digital literacy programs and the provision of digital devices to underserved communities to meet their objectives. A future in South Africa that is democratic and heavily reliant on digital and electronic politics and government is suggested by the realities of fewer social meetings and the potential cumulative efficiencies of coming technology, particularly robotics and artificial intelligence.

It is believed that social media has both a necessary and contributing role in the transformation of young people's levels of civic engagement. The advent of social media platforms as arenas for activism and political engagement allows young South Africans to express their political and socioeconomic concerns in unconventional ways, thereby contributing to the advancement of democracy.

Although current literature and research advocates and indicates that social media are the best platforms for communication with young people, given the socio-economic status of many young women in Cape Town's marginalised and vulnerable communities, access to a phone is not possible for everyone, as articulated by Participant 5:

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Participant 5

No, because not everyone is privileged to have a phone.

Participant 5's remarks regarding the lack of "privilege" in owning a phone shed light on the challenges of poverty and low socioeconomic status prevalent in our communities. Despite the common assumption that all young individuals possess cell phones, this is not the case for many young women, necessitating alternative methods or tools to engage and involve them. While having a cell phone could facilitate the sending and receiving of notifications for community meetings, not all young women have access to this technology. For those who do, data availability poses a significant challenge, particularly given the high levels of unemployment in Cape Town.

Furthermore, there exists an unequal distribution of technology in numerous developing nations and regions of Africa, including South Africa, as indicated by both the existing literature and primary data gathered for the current study. The literature illustrates a technological gap between the "haves," who can afford and access the internet, and the "have-nots," who either cannot use computers and smartphones or lack internet access (Nwafor et al., 2013; Chatora, 2012). In South Africa, substantial disparities in population, class, and social status are prevalent, particularly in impoverished rural and semi-urban areas. Due to the lack of access to social media and the internet among the youth in these communities, social media usage is often perceived as a privilege of the middle class and elite (Chatora, 2012; Mhlomi & Osunkunle, 2017; Mbenga, 2012; Manning, 2001; Adibe, 2010, Nwafor et al., 2013).

Additionally, Participant 9 highlighted concerns regarding the prevalence of fake news and scepticism towards information shared on social media platforms. Throughout the focus groups, it became evident that due to the widespread forwarding and broadcasting of messages, young individuals are often hesitant to believe information related to meetings or other engagements.

Participant 9 remarks:

No, announcements/ advertisements in newspapers barely get to young women and if on social media most of the time young women would think the information is fake

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Most of the young women preferred the more 'traditional' tools like door-to-door pamphlet drop-offs and load hailing to get people mobilised and interested in attending engagements.

Practitioners

However, practitioners do feel that social media tools are useful, but they also highlight the fact that different tools must be applied in different contexts (Practitioner 1). Practitioners, however, also indicated that the municipality is using 'old' tools/ methods of communication.

> Practitioner 1
>
> *The City has 21 Sub Councils and 116 wards and the concept of different strokes for different folks apply suiting the needs as far as possible. The Community Organisation database these Sub Councils use are mostly updated*

> Practitioner 2
>
> *Yes. They are making use of social media as well as local newspapers and notices at Sub-council offices. I do think that a communication platform such as social media is persuasive, and often works to change or influence opinions when it comes to political views because of the abundance of ideas, thoughts, and opinions circulating through the social media platform. On the other hand, many of our communities do not have access to social media, hence the use of local newspaper and notices at Sub-council offices.*

> Practitioner 7
>
> *Yes but the municipality could also use more inclusive platforms and advertise on more accessible platforms for young people like social media platforms, sports fields/organisations and Colleges or Universities and, especially if they want to target young people.*

From the practitioner's responses above, it is clear that the local community newspaper, community radio stations, community libraries, the sub-council's notice boards, and other kinds of community-based facilities can be more beneficial in communities where people do not have access to social media platforms and cell phones.

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5.3.6 Further suggestions from the participants, with a focus on communication tools

The participants offered practical suggestions that were grounded in the real-life contexts experienced by young women. The idea of utilising public transportation such as buses and taxis for advertising was raised, acknowledging that while social media may not always be accessible, it was still mentioned as part of the suggestions.

Moreover, there were frequent suggestions for the municipality to continue using traditional methods such as pamphleteering and posters, but the crucial need for meetings to be held face-to-face in open fields, community venues, and other accessible community-level facilities where individuals can safely walk to became apparent. Responses advocating for the use of loud-hailing, door-to-door visits, and the involvement of young people in promoting public and community meetings were also emphasised.

The community is urging the local council to continue utilising social media but with greater practicality. The persistent need for "old school" approaches remains relevant despite the findings of recent research. Post-COVID-19, the widespread shift to online and virtual communication platforms was evident, but considering the circumstances of the citizens and the communities served by local councils, this approach may not be practical and may not meet their specific needs.

Loader (2007) and Mbenga (2012) argue that other academics have criticised youth political apathy. They contend that traditional modes of political participation are no longer viewed as sufficient by young people, not due to inherent disinterest in politics but rather due to the impact of technology advancements and the increasing popularity of social media platforms. These platforms have created virtual political spaces that allow for greater freedom of expression and have caused young individuals to reconsider their political involvement (Lim, 2009; Astuti, 2016).

However, Mbenga (2012) argues that academics depicting South African youth in this manner are entrenched in conventional and traditional participation methods. Hlomi and Osunkunle (2017) assert that "young people are not apathetic to politics," and instead, it is the manner in which they engage politically that has evolved, supporting this notion. According to Mhlomi and Osunkunle (2017), the increasing use of social media in political campaigns has been shown to have a positive impact on young people's voting decisions.

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Mitchell and Murray (2012), Budree, Fietkiewicz and Elmar (2019), and Morrison (2016) noted that the use of social media by young people has sparked discussions and enhanced understanding of the experiences of marginalised groups. Engagement through social media platforms presents an alternative narrative to the portrayal of young people as disinterested in politics and challenges the belief that older generations should be the sole participants in political engagement in South Africa. All the hashtag movements have translated into physical protests, and the ongoing online discourse has encouraged a greater number of young people to engage in Facebook and Twitter debates and to participate in demonstrations in person.

In terms of the practitioners' responses, there was consensus around the use of posters and pamphlets as well as compiling community email databases to share information as articulated by Practitioners 2 and 3.

> Practitioner 2
> *I think that the council is doing a good job when it comes to communicating with the public. Using a communication platform such as social media is persuasive, and often works to change or influence opinions when it comes to political views because of the abundance of ideas, thoughts, and opinions circulating through the social media platform.*
> *On the other hand, many of our communities do not have access to social media, hence the use of local newspaper and notices at Sub council offices.*
> *I would also suggest that more campaigns be rolled out where official go into the various communities (ground level) making the public aware of things that are taking place in the government and encourage the public support and participation in order for the government to*

> Practitioner 3
> *Use platforms that are youth friendly to trigger the interest of young people. Address issues of young people as identified by them. Provide safe spaces for young persons to participate. Provide resources or at least access to resources for young people*

Practitioner 6 raised a pertinent point regarding the reality that despite the utilisation of various communication tools or platforms, some young individuals are simply unwilling to engage or

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participate in government processes. Hence, the lack of interest among young women could be considered a contributing factor to the limited levels of participation. The research findings might also suggest that considering the pressing priorities prevailing in the communities where young women reside, participation may not be a top priority for them. Coupled with high levels of unemployment and limited access to tertiary education, involvement in public participation processes may be the least of their concerns. It is crucial to recognise that the experiences of young women must be understood within their personal contexts, considering how they prioritise and navigate their realities within their communities.

> Practitioner 6
> *No matter what tools are used to market or communicate to people, there will be those that are active in participating, those that sometimes participate and sometimes do not participate and those who do not participate at all no matter the kind of tool used.*

The involvement of the local ward councillors in ensuring that information on local government processes is shared comes up with both Practitioners 7 and 8, and this is important for the accountability of the people elected by communities who should push for their voices, especially women's voices, to be heard.

> Practitioner 7
> *I do think that when engaging in public participation recruitment for communities the ward councillors should also use local radio station to announce upcoming meetings and agenda of the meetings and encourage young women to attend these meetings, and emphasise the role of young women in public participation. I also do think the council like your ward councillors, sub councillors should do community training on the functions of local government, and the role of the community in public participation as that education is missing in the communities mainly because people do not know they play a crucial role in decision making concerning developments in their communities.*

> Practitioner 8
> *If we can have more public meetings where ward councillors can report back their work in order for them to be held accountable. '*

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At the local government level, local ward councillors and community leaders significantly influence women and are the vehicles through which messages are disseminated (Oyesomi et al., 2017). Therefore, ward councillors can ensure that young women are engaged and participate at the local level. They can find the tools and chances to get involved, impact the decision-making process, and develop skills that they can use in the official political arena at the local level (Oyesomi et al., 2017). Oyesomi et al. (2017) emphasise that important gatekeepers and local community stakeholders ought to encourage young women's involvement in the planning, execution, and assessment of these initiatives and leadership events.

5.3.7 Sense of hopelessness in local government and service delivery

Throughout the interviews and focus group discussions, issues of service delivery and the 'incompetence' of government through lack of proper service delivery were raised and can be picked up from the findings mentioned above as well.

At the end of the interviews and focus group discussions, participants were asked if there was anything else that they would like to add. Below are individual responses from the young women. Many of the final comments could also be interpreted as pleas from the young women for better 'community service', jobs/ employment opportunities and efforts to enable them to participate and have their voices heard.

Below is a summary of the words that came up most frequently:

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5.4 Recommendations from participants to the local council

Table 8: Scale of recommendations from interviewees

Scale – low to high

	Low	Medium	High
Provide better community services.			×
Share more information on processes and opportunities.		×	
Have more platforms for engagement.		×	
Provide better communication			×
Create more employment opportunities.			×
Women should rise and get involved.		×	

Table 8 shows the important matters that were raised by the young women participants when I was conducting the research.

Matters that were identified as **high** priorities and emphasised by the participants included requests for enhanced community services, improved communication, and increased employment opportunities. These three issues emerged as significant concerns among most participants, and while the research did not specifically centre on employment and community services, these themes surfaced consistently throughout the interviews and discussions. Participants expressed a clear expectation for local government to deliver community-focused services to its residents, underscoring the need for improved communication regarding these services and public engagement platforms. Additionally, the pressing need for employment opportunities or increased job prospects was highlighted, with participants acknowledging the prevailing high levels of unemployment in their communities, thus emphasising the necessity for government intervention at all levels.

Matters that were categorised as **medium** priority included the necessity for increased dissemination of information regarding processes and opportunities, the call for the local council to establish additional engagement platforms, and the encouragement for women to take a stand and engage actively. This research project underscored the advocacy for these matters, and participants recognised the significance of their voices, particularly those of young women, as essential within public platforms. As a result, there was a growing awareness among participants of the imperative for women, especially young women, to hold local government

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accountable, ensuring that information is shared transparently and that platforms are established to amplify their voices effectively.

There were no specific matters that ranked as **low.** Therefore, this confirms matters that were high on the agenda of the participants as the interview discussions were continuing and evolving throughout the data collection process.

It also becomes clearer that a gender lens must be used on all local government-related matters. Schoberlein (2020) argues that good public governance includes gender-sensitive interventions and an introduction of efforts to increase overall diversity and inclusion of marginalised groups within communities. In the context of the LGBTIQA+ community in South Africa and Cape Town expressly, this marginalised group can no longer be excluded. Porter (2018) notes that legally, socially, and economically, gender non-conforming and non-binary people are still barred from fully engaging in South African society. However, this cannot continue at the local level since this community also has access to essential services from the local government.

5.5 Limitations

As with any study, various challenges were encountered pre-, during and post-the research process.

- **Lack of interest by young women** – Only 23 of the initial 30 young women were interviewed and attended one of the focus groups. The seven that did not form part of the research did not want to participate any longer, although they initially committed to attending and participating. Their reasons included that they were no longer interested in participating, and some just did not pitch at the agreed-upon scheduled times.
- **Data collection** – in some instances, it wasn't easy to get the young women to give longer than one-word answers/ responses to the questions. Follow-up questions had to be asked, and pressure could not be put on the participants to say more than what they were willing to say.
- **Sampling** – as indicated above, initially, 30 young women and 10 participants were targeted, but only 23 women pitched to be interviewed, and eight (8) practitioners agreed to be interviewed

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5.6 Discussion of findings

Chapter three articulates the crucial role of the People-Centred Development (PCD) Theory in justifying and contextualising this research study. The PCD concept, which prioritises the active participation and empowerment of individuals and groups in development initiatives, is the cornerstone of this study. It underscores the idea that the objectives, capabilities, and requirements of the people development efforts they are intended to support should take precedence.

PCD theory states that development aims to improve human well-being, reduce inequality, ensure that the people who should benefit from development projects are the ones spearheading them, and boost economic progress. It is a thorough and cooperative approach that challenges conventional top-down development tactics in favour of more inclusive and sustainable ones.

The data paints an interesting picture when analysing the research data in the context of the two main theoretical concepts that inform PCD thinking, i.e., participation and empowerment.

In terms of participation**,** the data collected consistently shows that young women need to participate in local movement public participation processes for a range of reasons. Their reasons range from needing to clearly understand the role and functions of local government to being affected by safety issues due to the vulnerable communities the participants reside in and access to resources, including financial resources, given the high employment levels amongst those interviewed.

Based on most of these reasons, the lack of or very low levels of participation should force the local council to reconsider and review exactly how they prioritise the involvement of young women and how they will rectify this lack. Via the media, we see that the local council continues to implement initiatives, e.g. building roads, clinics, and crèches that affect young women and women in general from the communities that they service. Yet, they continue to exclude young women from ensuring their voices are heard through the design and implementation of these projects. Unfortunately, due to the lack of knowledge of the role and functions of local government, young women cannot insert themselves; therefore, the onus is on the local council to ensure that their initial conceptualisation of any initiative or intervention includes young women from the start.

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The data also shows that local ward councillors need to do more to ensure that the young women who are 18 and older that they scout to vote for them participate in public processes beyond just voting during elections. Meaningful participation should be viewed beyond the notion of tokenism, as this breeds negativity and a sense of hopelessness amongst the young women who generally want to participate at the local level. The data shows varying levels of hopelessness expressed by the participants, and the local ward councillors must address this as the first port of call for any local movement-specific issues raised by a resident or organisation.

The data underscores the urgent need for empowerment initiatives to enable young women to participate more willingly and easily. Without empowerment, their participation at any level of government remains a challenge. Empowerment begins with understanding. If young women grasp the functions and mandates of the local council, they can make informed and meaningful contributions during public meetings. This understanding also equips them to address local government-specific challenges in the appropriate manner and through the right channels. The local council needs to advocate for this level of empowerment, ensuring that young women feel informed and knowledgeable about their local government.

Suppose the local council wishes to continue using social media platforms to communicate around their public participation processes. In that case, they need to ensure that young women are empowered and equipped with the tools to engage meaningfully. Given the high poverty levels across the many vulnerable and marginalised communities in the Cape Metro, the digital divide is real, and those affected by it need the necessary access if it will enable their voices to be heard. The data collected shows that those with tertiary qualifications have more understanding and access and, therefore, can engage; hence, if the local council empowers those with limitations, the voices heard will reflect the communities they serve.

The data collected shows that the communication tools currently utilised by the local council are not all effective and insufficient. Current tools should be reviewed in the context of social media and access to data and Wi-Fi. Although more current tools like social media platforms are relevant and welcomed, the participants articulated a need that requires older methods of pamphlets, posters, and big meetings on open fields as well.

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5.7 Conclusion

The data collected and analysed made it clear that although the municipality has public participation processes in place as per their mandate, the critical voices of young women, who make up such a huge part of the voter statistics, are going unheard. Young women are not deliberately being mobilised to participate and need access to information about the local council's process. The council is utilising the current communication tools to get their voices heard, which needs to be improved.

Thirty-nine percent (39%) of the young women who participated in the study knew the functions of local government, and only (4%) of the young women who participated in the study attended a public/ community meeting. None of the 23 young women participated in a public participation process at the local government level. All participants felt that young women want to participate in local government processes. Given the growing youth bulge in the Metro and the high numbers of women who vote during local government elections, this has implications for local councils. The data shows that young women do not entirely understand the functions of its local council and, therefore, do not participate in its processes because they also do not understand what the processes entail. So, for young women to participate, they must first be empowered by understanding what the local council's mandate is and how they, as young women, fit into bringing that mandate to life.

Because young women cannot participate, policies need to be developed to ensure that they learn what the public participation processes entail and what the requirements are from their side. Hicks (2011) poses the question as to how underprivileged or marginalised women can be enabled to meaningfully participate in local governance and development planning processes using the current municipal public involvement mechanisms? What remedies or different strategies are needed to deal with this? Young women's voices cannot be absent when new clinics are being built – they need to be advised on the types of services required, where the clinic should be built, and which services are most needed at the facilities. As one of the participants in the focus group mentioned, 'I think our young woman should be involved in these types of meetings because, as you said, where it's concerning for the road or the streetlights that are not on, we cannot, you are not allowed to walk outside. Moreover, I feel like our lives are primarily in danger compared to a male outside'.

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However, the data shows that young women want to participate, and the practitioners' responses attest to this. The tools being used to communicate could be more effective and sufficient to ensure the participation of young women. Eighty-seven (87%) of the young women who participated in the study felt that the municipality needed to use the correct communication tools. However, regarding the issue of communication tools, 65% thought that the city should revert to traditional marketing tools, i.e. leaflets, posters, door-to-door and open field meetings; therefore, consideration should be given as to what the council deems as youth-friendly communication styles and tools.

Although not a key objective of the study, the need for employment opportunities frequently arose through the data analysis process. Young women's voices must be heard when the local government wants to create employment or provide youth training opportunities. Young women should be saying what kinds of training and employment are necessary as they understand their needs best and can give the most relevant advice or input. This will also ensure ownership and buy-in from these young women when projects are implemented because they contribute to the conceptualisation processes; therefore, they will own the process and mobilise others to buy into the local government's agenda.

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Chapter 6: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1. Introduction

The final chapter of this thesis attempts to summarise the overall intent of the study as well as provide recommendations to the local council and other metro municipalities in South Africa that might have similar experiences around the public participation levels of young women aged 18 – 25 years of age. This chapter also provides an overall summary of the thesis as well as snippets of the key findings that came about through the data collection and analysis processes. The chapter goes on to contextualise the key conclusions in relation to the three objectives set out by the study.

The chapter ends with recommendations based on the findings and analysis of the data. The findings will be put forward for consideration and action by local government institutions and local community-based organisations involved in youth development and gender spaces. Recommendations for future research are also made based on the literature gaps identified and experiences discussed with the participants requiring intervention that will ensure their equal and willing participation.

6.2 Thesis summary

This study attempted to understand the factors affecting the participation levels of young women in the City of Cape Town's civic processes. It further assessed whether young women aged 18 – 25 want to participate and whether they are currently participating in the City of Cape Town's public participation processes. The study proposes ways to ensure that young women's voices are heard and included in future processes, as issues at the local level affect young women daily.

From the literature review chapter, it becomes clear that the implications of not ensuring the participation of young women in local government processes that require their voice are detrimental to any community, given the growing youth bulge in South Africa. Issues of unemployment, drug abuse, gangsterism, teenage pregnancy and many other social issues affecting young people are rife. Therefore, to address these issues, young women must be included in all interventions from conceptualisation to the implementation stage. Although many studies have been on young women's adolescent engagement, there is a vacuum in our

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understanding of young women's participation in the reviewed literature. The experiences of young women are not prioritised, and as a result, their unique problems are not highlighted around public participation processes.

This study reveals that young women want to be involved in decision-making processes that impact their futures and means of subsistence, even though they may not wholly comprehend the role and responsibilities of local government. Young people in Cape Town prefer to be engaged through more conventional, or "old school," forms of communication, such as gatherings outside on fields, pamphlets and posters. However, although some individuals criticise young people for using social media for political involvement, this unconventional method of participating in politics has been applauded for its democratic potential, particularly in South Africa (e.g. #FeesMustFall).

The local government sphere is designed to enable civic participation. However, the focus is more on electioneering and prioritising participation mainly for political gain or during local and national elections, and this needs to be addressed. Policies and programmes must be prioritised, including the women's voices, mainly those politicians think will 'benefit' from these interventions.

A mental shift is needed, especially for the young women in our communities who want to see social change despite not having any political ambitions or aspirations because of the numerous difficulties that local communities face. Young women need to be made more frequently aware of the implications of their non-participation and how they compromise their futures and the futures of the children who will become residents in the communities where they find themselves.

6.3 Conclusions

The main conclusions drawn from the research that will be unpacked here are linked to the research objectives of this study, which are as follows: (1) To determine the participation levels of young women in the City of Cape Town's local government public participation processes; (2) To understand the issues that determine the involvement of young women in local government public participation processes; and (3) To determine the outcomes of the participation of young women in local government processes in the City of Cape Town.

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Objective 1: To determine the participation levels of young women in the City of Cape Town's local government public participation processes

The research study data shows that the participation levels of the young women aged 18 – 25 residing in communities in Cape Town were zero. This is primarily linked to a lack of understanding as to what the functions of local government are and what the local government's public participation processes entail, and this is problematic based on the primary purpose/ functions of local government and the purpose it is supposed to serve for its citizens.

Objective 2: To understand the issues that determine the involvement of young women in local government public participation processes

The research study data shows that because of a lack of understanding of the role and functioning of the local council, it is difficult for young women to understand what their level of involvement should be at the local government level. Also, not understanding the dynamics of the ward council's political accountability limits women's involvement in participation processes. Citizens, like young women, should hold their local ward councillors accountable, mainly because they access the services in communities that ward councillors often politicise.

What is also evident from the research is the fact that more than the current tools used to communicate with young people and citizens in general are needed. Types to be used need to be contextualised and tailored for the specific needs of a community based on their realities in terms of poverty levels and access to resources. A critical point raised by Kosciulek (2020) is also that variations in needs and experiences between 'younger' youth (15-24) and 'older' youth (25 – 35) are not always appreciated nor accounted for in consultative or public participation processes and this is crucial in understanding which tools or methods are used for the particular age category, as well as the issues that I prioritised or addressed whether through policies or interventions targeting young people.

Objective 3: To determine the outcomes of the participation of young women in local government processes in the City of Cape Town

The research study data shows that young women want to participate in local government processes that will benefit them as individuals and their broader communities. Enaifoghe and

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Dlamini (2021) write that excluding the youth population from politics and neglecting their critical roles in socio-economic development has consequences. In South Africa, the youth engage with the government through violent protests instead of participating in governance; this results from youth dissatisfaction, a high rate of unemployment and the failure to meet their demands. If an effort is made to include young women in participation processes intentionally, they will have alternative approaches to raising their concerns about governance issues.

The research also shows that young women play various roles in the homes and communities as learners, students, employees, mothers, daughters and community residents. Given women's multiple roles in society, their various identities should be used in the quest to ensure their participation. Therefore, if young women are prioritised and given the multiple roles and identities they need to navigate, they will benefit themselves and the communities they reside in. This will, in turn, lead to better or better governance and active citizenry based not only on the agendas set by politicians for people but also by those who actively drive and pursue the agendas.

To make interventions more meaningful and relevant, there must be a push at the local government level to ensure the inclusivity of all types of communities in participation processes, particularly in light of young people's desire to be included and engaged but on terms that speak to their contexts.

6.4 Recommendations

The overall recommendations will cover two categories, i.e. recommendations for the City of Cape Town and future research.

6.4.1 Policy recommendations

The study reveals that the City of Cape Town and municipalities, in general, should deliberately and strategically incorporate the voices of young women during their various public participation initiatives. This poses a significant challenge, especially considering the growing youth bulge in the Metro and South Africa in general.

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It has become apparent from the review of existing literature and interactions with the young women involved in this research study, as well as with the practitioners, that there is a notable lack of research focused on this specific age group of young women and their experiences and interactions with local government. This encompasses their access to services and engagement with issues impacting their daily lives. Further research addressing this critical aspect is necessary to ensure that local government interventions do not become ineffective or irrelevant at the local level, particularly considering the substantial representation of young women within their local communities.

Recommendation 1: Municipalities' IDPs must acknowledge the importance of prioritising young voices and show this throughout their 5-year plans

The City of Cape Town and municipalities, in general, must acknowledge and recognise the significance of incorporating young people and their voices in public participation processes. Considering that women outnumber men statistically in the country, they can no longer be disregarded or marginalized.

As each municipality is obligated to disseminate its Integrated Development Plan (IDP) to the citizens it serves through various consultations and processes to finalise the IDP, local councils must not only involve young women but ensure that young women can see themselves reflected in these 5-year plans. The different departments responsible for services that impact young women should explicitly demonstrate throughout the document how their budgets, implementation plans, resource audits, performance monitoring, and community consultations include young women from the communities. Services such as roads and infrastructure, transportation, local economic development, water, sewerage and waste management, health facilities, provision of land, and early childhood development (ECD) facilities to communities should distinctly exhibit how young women are prioritised for the IDPs to be developmental and "citizen-oriented." This comprehensive approach will lead to young women's engagement in processes as they will feel recognised and included not only during crucial political periods but throughout the 5-year plan, which will ultimately benefit them and their families. This will also enable them to hold local councils accountable.

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Recommendation 2: Municipalities must have a youth-specific and focused communication policy and/or strategy

It is recommended that municipalities develop youth-focused communication policies and strategies that take into account the various contexts in which young people find themselves, such as socio-economic status, educational levels, and other prevalent variables within their communities. In the absence of a strategy or policy, councils cannot be held accountable or challenged by young women. The policy/strategy should encompass all young people residing within the local council boundaries but should demonstrate outputs and outcomes that prioritise the voices of young women.

Inclusive communication tools that recognise the limited access to resources such as data, Wi-Fi, and mobile devices, given the high levels of poverty in the vulnerable communities of Cape Town, should be acknowledged in the policy/strategy. It is evident that young women are willing to engage and participate in public participation processes; therefore, the appropriate tools must be utilised, even if they are considered traditional. Suppose it facilitates the inclusion of young women. In that case, it will yield the desired outcomes of active citizenship and young women advocating for their own issues, thereby rendering all local government interventions relevant and appropriate because young people are involved in the conceptualisation and implementation.

Recommendation 3: The Independent Electoral Commission (I.E.C.) must compel political parties to capacitate young women as local ward councillors and force parties to have quotas for young women on party lists

The role of a ward councillor needs to be made more appealing for young women, not only due to their status as majority voters but also because of the access it provides to women in general within the local government sphere. It is strongly recommended that the Independent Electoral Commission (I.E.C.), political parties, and local councils take proactive steps to enhance the capacity of young women to participate in political spaces and incorporate their political voices as an essential component of youth development interventions.

The focus should no longer be solely on ensuring that women, particularly young women, vote for them during election times. Instead, they need to recognise young women beyond tokenism

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and view them as active change agents who can significantly contribute to the well-being and agency of their communities, including the very communities that the council is responsible for providing basic services to.

Actively and consistently engaging young women will greatly benefit the cause of local government if executed effectively. Local councillors can and should ensure that young women participate at all levels of any intervention implemented in the council.

A shift in mindset is necessary, especially among young women in our communities who may not have political aspirations or agendas but seek to witness social change in response to the numerous challenges faced by local communities. Local government councils and practitioners should consider effectiveness as a criterion to comprehend the connection between political engagement, outward efficacy, and personal efficacy.

6.4.2 Recommendations for future research

Further research and investigation into the level of political involvement among young women in the 18-25 age category is crucial, as one of the fundamental prerequisites for policy changes in the gender arena is for women to advocate for their issues. To ensure that young women can articulate their ideas and develop their agendas, they must comprehend the significance of their voices in political leadership spaces to effect policy and strategy changes. Future research should facilitate this understanding.

It would also be beneficial to delve into race-related factors specific to local young women aged 18-25 that influence their involvement and participation in public participation processes. Most of the young women who participated in this study were coloured females, and it would be valuable to gain insights into the participation levels of black and white young women at the local level. Given that many communities in local councils are diverse, it would be interesting to explore whether young women of the same age from these communities have different experiences and reasons for their participation or non-participation.

The research into the employment status of young women aged 18-25 residing locally and its influence on their involvement and participation in public participation processes will provide valuable insights. It would be beneficial to assess the participation levels of employed,

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unemployed, or high school students (aged 18 and older). The unemployed may have more time to participate. However, it is also possible that they are disheartened by the lack of employment opportunities the government provides, leading to their non-participation. This research will be instrumental in evaluating the adjustments necessary to approach young women's involvement.

Investigating the educational levels of young women aged 18-25 is also crucial, especially in light of findings related to their engagement in political and public activities at tertiary institutions. Exploring how the perceived benefits of participation vary based on educational levels will be crucial if local councils aim to make their processes more appealing and relevant to the diverse demographics they serve.

Moreover, future research on the relevance and effectiveness of social media tools in the various communities within the Cape Town Metro will be necessary. While global research suggests that platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp are preferred by young people, given the poverty levels in the vulnerable and marginalised communities of Cape Town, this assumption will require contextualisation.

The proposed methodologies should incorporate both traditional and modern data collection methods, considering this study's findings. Utilising social media/virtual tools as well as traditional methods such as community focus groups should consider various vulnerabilities citizens face, such as safety, employment status, and overall access to financial resources, in determining the timing and locations for conducting research.

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Annexures

Annexure 1: Information sheet

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Annexure 1: Information sheet

UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X17, Bellville 7535, Cape Town, South Africa
Telephone: 021 959 3858/6 Fax: 021 959 3865
E-mail: pkippie@uwc.ac.za or mdinbabo@uwc.ac.za

INFORMATION SHEET

FOR *FOCUS GROUPS:* Young women aged 18 – 25 years old who reside in the City of Cape Town Metropole boundaries

I, **Abigail Jacobs-Williams,** am pursuing my Master's degree at the **Institute for Social Development at the University of the Western Cape, South Africa**. I would like to invite you to take part in my research project. Please take time to read the following information carefully, and please feel free to ask questions if anything you read is not clear to you or if you'd like more information.

Project Title:
Participation levels of young women in municipal civic public participation processes in Cape Town

What is this study about?
The purpose of this study is to understand the participation levels of young women in the City of Cape Town's public participation processes. This study is significant because young women's voices are crucial to public participation processes, yet they are clearly absent at the various levels of government, particularly the local government level, which is the level of government closest to the people. You are invited to participate in this project because the study wants to demonstrate that if various tools and platforms are utilised in order to ensure the participation of young women in local government processes, the active citizenry will

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increase to the advantages of the local communities that municipalities service. After all, without the voices of young women, inclusive communities do not exist.

What is the Focus group about?

The Focus group seeks to provide in-depth insight as to why most young women are not participating and also to get solutions from young women that can be presented to the City of Cape Town as considerations for policy amendments around their public participation processes. It also helped to understand how local government practitioners and stakeholders from the City of Cape Town who are responsible for public participation processes see the role of young women in public participation processes.

Will my participation in this study be kept confidential?

All participation will be treated with confidentiality and integrity. All personal information will be kept confidential and will remain anonymous. To protect your privacy and confidentiality, you will be required to sign a consent form before partaking in the study. The researcher shall not reveal the identity of the participants and will safeguard the confidential information obtained in the course of the study.

What are the risks of this research?

There are no risks anticipated from participating in this study, but should you feel emotionally or psychologically vulnerable or stressed, I will refer you to Hope House Counselling Centre, which will be able to provide the necessary emotional or psychological support required.

Is any assistance available if I am negatively affected by participating in this study?

You will be able to seek support from the Hope House Counselling Centre (Home - Hope House Counselling Centre)

What are the benefits of this research?

There are no material benefits for the participants (respondents).

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Do I have to complete the whole focus group proceedings, or may I withdraw from the process at any time?

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. Should you feel the need to withdraw from the study, you can do so at any time.

How long will it take to complete the whole focus group process?

The full focus group session will take about 90 minutes to complete.

Do I need to bring anything to the focus group?

You do not have to bring anything.

What if I have questions?

This research is being conducted by **Abigail Jacobs–Williams,** a student at the University of the Western Cape.

NB: Please note that **Abigail Jacobs–Williams** is also a full-time employee of the City of Cape Town

In terms of the requirements of the Protection of Personal Information Act (Act 4 of 2013), personal information will be collected and processed: ☐ I hereby give consent for my personal information to be collected, stored, processed and shared as described in the information sheet. ☐ I do not give consent for my personal information to be collected, stored, processed and shared as described in the information sheet.

Signatures

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Name of Participant (*or legal representative*)	Date	Signature
Abigail Jacobs - Williams		
Name of person taking consent *(If different from the lead researcher)*	Date	Signature
Supervisor	Date	Signature

Copies: All participants will receive a copy of the signed and dated version of the consent form and information sheet for themselves. A copy of this will be filed and kept in a secure location for research purposes only.

Should you have any require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me, **Abigail Jacobs – Williams** on my cell phone at **0810103201** or via email (2251732@myuwc.ac.za). Alternatively, may also contact my supervisor, **Prof Daniel Tevera,** in the Department of Geography, Environmental Studies & Tourism, University of the Western Cape (UWC), dtevera@uwc.ac.za

This research project has received ethical approval from the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape, Tel. 021 959 4111, E-mail: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za

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Annexure 2: Letter of consent

UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

INSTITUTE for SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Private Bag X17, Bellville 7535, Cape Town, South Africa
Telephone: 021 959 3858/6 Fax: 021 959 3865
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LETTER OF CONSENT:

To participate in an in-depth interview for the study conducted by Abigail Jacobs-Williams entitled *Participation Levels of Young Women in Municipal Civic Public Participation Processes in Cape Town*.

I, ……, have read and understood the information sheet regarding this research.

- I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study and received satisfactory answers to my questions and any additional details I wanted.
- I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary. I am free to participate and have the right to withdraw from the study at any time, without having to explain myself.
- I am aware that the information I provide in the **in-depth interview might result in research that** may be published.
- I understand that any written output resulting from this **in-depth interview** will never use my name, that is, my identity will not be revealed in any form.
- I agree to answer the questions to the best of my ability.
- I may also refuse to answer questions that I don't want to answer.
- I understand and agree that this **in-depth interview** may be voice-recorded.
- I agree to keep the insights and stories shared by other participants in this **in-depth interview** confidential, and I will not disclose any personal details of other participants after this focus group has ended.

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By signing this letter, I give free and informed consent to participate in this **in-depth interview**.

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Annexure 3: Questions schedule

UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

ISD INSTITUTE *for* SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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QUESTIONNAIRE

FOR *IN–DEPTH INTERVIEWS:* Young women aged 18 – 25 years old who reside in the City of Cape Town Metropole boundaries

Questions:

- Do you know what the functions of local government municipalities are?
- When was the last time you attended a community or public meeting?
- Have you ever participated in a public participation process, e.g. given feedback on a policy, or a buy-law or made comments on the budget?
- Do you think that young women want to participate in local government public participation processes?
- Do you think that your municipality is using the correct tools to communicate or advertise government processes?
- Do you have any suggestions for better tools to be used or how the council can market and communicate better?
- Is there anything you would like to add?

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