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UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND



SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF ORGANISATIONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL STUDIES

MA: ORGANISATIONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL STUDIES

RESEARCH REPORT

TOPIC: THE IDENTITY OF A PUBLIC SERVANT

(THE CASE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT)

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ABSTRACT

Bureaucratic administration literature has previously considered a variety of explanations for public servants' decision-making behaviours, including various inherent and extrinsic motivations that range from lack of skills to the venal and corrupt behaviours of public servants.

The study examines the motives for the actions of public servants in the City of Johannesburg metropolitan municipality. Some of these actions may carry sanctions, according to prescribed rules of the municipality and government in general; or they may deviate from the norms of public administration. Using the logics of appropriateness framework, the research argues that public servants who act in these rule-breaking and deviant ways, may do so in the interests of the municipality and not because they have personal or corrupt reasons for doing so.

Rather, public servants pursue deviant courses of action, which become patterns as they are repeated, precisely because they are working within several constraints that are not considered by prescribed laws and regulations. Thus, public servants will use only the rules that they deem appropriate when faced with constraints and in situational environments.

Key words: identity, rules, decision-making, local government, public servants

DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is of my own work. It is submitted to the Humanities faculty, under the School of Social Sciences, at the University of the Witwatersrand, for the degree of Master of Arts in Organisational and Institutional Studies.



…….. ……...**11/11/2021**……

Signature Date

DEDICATION

I would like to first thank the Almighty God for his guidance and strength. For being with me throughout this whole process. To my family, thank you for the support, understanding, and encouraging me to take this journey.

I would also want to express my sincerest gratitude to my supervisor Dr Tracy Ledger. Your guidance and encouragement throughout this entire process is deeply appreciated.

To the Public Affairs Research Institute, thank you for the support that you provided towards my studies. I am forever grateful for the opportunity of being a fellow at the institute.

Lastly, I would like to thank the leadership of the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality, for affording me the time in their busy schedules and the opportunity to conduct my research with the municipality.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AGSA	**Auditor-General of South Africa**
ANC	**African National Congress**
AR	**Annual Report**
CoJ	**City of Johannesburg**
COGTA	**Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs**
KPA	**Key Performance Area**
MFMA	**Municipal Finance Management Act**
NPM	**National Public Management**
PSRB	**Pro-Social Rule Breaking**
SCM	**Supply Chain Management**
SALGA	**South African Local Government Association**

Table of Contents Page No.

Abstract …….2

Declaration ……3

Dedication …….4

Acronyms and Abbreviations ...…...…….....5

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background ……..….10

1.2 Problem statement …….……...13

1.3 Rationale ……...14

1.4 Research question …….....15

1.5 Research Objectives ……...…...15

1.6 Scope of the research …….15

1.7 Structure of the chapters ……16

1.8 Terms …….17

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction ……18

2.2 Identity ……18

2.3 Symbolic interactionalist theory…….....…...21

2.4 Administrative Behaviour ……...21

2.5 Corruption ……...24

2.6 Procedural oversight ……27

2.7 Conclusion ……...29

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH MEHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction ……..……..…….31

3.2 The research design and purpose ……...…...31

3.3 The methodology …….…….….31

3.3.1 Data collection …….…….…....32

- Primary data
- Interviews and questionnaires
- Sample size and selection criteria

3.4 Case study ……33

3.5 Method of data analysis ……...34

3.6 Validity of the study …….35

3.7 Ethics ……36

3.8 Limitations of the study ……36

3.9 Conclusion ……37

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION

4.1 Introduction …….….38

4.2 Categories of the participants ……...38

4.3 Presentation of the research findings ……...….40

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction ……52

5.2 The Logic of Appropriateness ……52

5.3 Conclusion …….…….58

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction …….59

6.2 Purpose Statement ……...59

6.3 Theoretical Setting/ Literature Review ……..59
6.4 Research Method ……61
6.5 Findings of the Study ……..61
6.6 Limitations of the Study ……62
6.7 Suggestions for Possible Research ……62
References ……..63

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 BACKGROUND

The notion around public servants is that their actions and decision-making is mostly hidden from public view (Stoker, 1992), so even the attentive citizens sometimes do not know the motive behind the actions and behaviour of those in public service. Public servants manage their difficult roles by psychologically simplifying their environment in ways that strongly influence the outcomes of their actions (Lipsky 2010, 9). Public administration literature has previously considered a variety of explanations for public servant behaviours, including various inherent and extrinsic motivations. These range from lack of skills to the venal and corrupt behaviours of public servants.

In general terms, a public servant can be defined as a person employed in the public sector either by government or an agency, to provide public service to its citizens efficiently and fairly (psc.gov, 2002). While there has been much research on the role of a public servant, few researchers have taken into consideration the identity or persona of public servants; and from the perspective of public servants themselves.

Public servants are often the interface between government bodies and citizens (Pegan 2002). They are employees in government or public service and function in state bodies under authority of the constitution and other legal regulations implemented by the state (Cardona 2000). They spend a significant time of their lives at work or occupied with work related activities. The environment wherein public servants' function has gotten progressively multifaceted in recent years, acquiring growing and diverse challenges in providing service delivery. They are confronted by more self-assured populaces, numerous and pluralistic requirements for public administrations, with new administrations being presented and existing administrations being rebuilt, and with new undertakings, innovation, skills, and information all being required (Wessels 2000, 311). This suggests that the ever-changing environment in which they function implies that they can presently do not depend on convention subject-based instruction to set them up for the term of their professions (Wessels 2000, 311). Public institutions and organizations are

significant in forming a public servant's identity as here is a unique collaboration among identity and places of work to influence each other equally (Miscenko 2002, 216).

According to the symbolic interactionist theory, identity is formation of the self-concept that involves role making as a construction of a role related identity. Identity offers a link between an individual and micro-structures (Turner, 2001), and relates to the individual's understanding of personal consequences of any behaviour (Owen and Serpe, 2003). Burke and Sets (2009, 189) state that a person "engages in actives that correspond in meaning to the meaning of their identity". This implies that people behave in ways that are consistent with how they perceive their roles. However, in dilemma situations there is no surety on how individuals may act (Schott, Seen and van Kleef, 2014), or how their notion of identity may determine their decision-making (Torpman, 2004). Wendt (1992) speaks of identity as a basis of interest. He argues that actors define their interests in the process of defining situations. "More situations have routine qualities in which we assign meanings based on institutionally defined roles" (Wendt 1992, 372). For instance, if public servants have an "interest" in ensuring the provision of services to communities, we are saying that for them to function in the identity of a public official, they need to define certain situations as calling for certain actions.

In the South African context, public servants in local government are entrusted with making decisions that are aligned to the administration of municipalities. From the municipal manager to heads of department, their decision-making processes are firstly guided by the regulations and legal frameworks of local government to co-ordinate and implement all programmes approved by council (SAGov, 2018/9). Under the 1996 constitution of the Republic of South Africa, public servants in local government were tasked with several social and economic responsibilities such as basic services for communities as a form of development in addressing and achieving the development objectives set by national government. Municipalities therefore became obliged to exercise their powers to achieve constitutional objectives as stated in the South Africa's White Paper on Local Government (1998), and to also exercise their authority in a way that meets the country's development obligations. Because effective service delivery is central to the functioning of local government, as this level or sphere of government, is the closest to the people. Local government has made immense contributions to South Africa's record of expanding service delivery to marginalized groups.

According to the 2009 ANC Election Manifesto “The developmental state will play a central and strategic role in the economy. We will ensure a more effective government; improve the coordination and planning efforts of the developmental state by means of a planning entity to ensure faster change" (ANC Election Manifesto 2009, 9). This led to the restructuring of municipalities by the ANC government in 1996, based on the characteristics of the New Public Management (NPM). The restructuring outlined that the financial process should be tailored within each functional area for the provision of services to ensure effective revenue management; financial stability; reduction in operational costs; and efficient internal processes.

Section B of Schedule 5 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Ac 108 of 1996, in relation to the functions that are agreed upon simultaneously with the constituent units of national and provincial competencies, identifies the following services which fall under the purview of municipalities within local government i.e., electricity, water, storm water drains, fire safety, town/city planning etc.

The local government mandate is also briefly contained in the local government preamble: Municipal Structure Act, 1998 (Act 117):

‘*A vision of democratic and developmental local government in which municipalities fulfill their constitutional obligations to ensure sustainable, effective and efficient municipal services, promote social and economic development, encourage a safe and healthy environment by working with communities in creating environments and human settlements in which all our people can lead uplifted and dignified lives*.’

However, the challenges remain significant. The public’s perceptions of local government remain negative. Many communities see their municipalities as a place of dysfunction, corruption, and inaccessibility. In the last decade, local government in South Africa has been hit with operational failures, which include the mismanagement of funds and poor supply management, amongst others. According to the Auditor-General of South Africa’s report (2019), these failures in areas such as financial and performance management, occurred despite there being laws and regulations in place to guide those entrusted with decision-making powers within local government. Thus, poor governance represents non-compliance from public servants, particularly from those entrusted with decision-making powers, to comply with statutory rules of local government.

Improper decisions may lead to local government failing to perform its primary function, especially if such failures occur repeatedly over a period. The failure of public servants to comply with the regulations and implementation processes of policies then leads to poor governance. Therefore, the consequences of these noncompliant actions of public servants create a negative effect on service delivery and adversely affect the well-being of community members in their daily lives, with service delivery issues such as water and sanitation or the efficient supply of electricity.

In the case of the City of Johannesburg metropolitan municipality (CoJ), as stated in note 54 of the financial statements as required in section 62 (1) (d) of the Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA), no reasonable action has been taken to prevent the irregular expenditure of R2 380 792 000 for the financial year 2018/19. Most of the irregular spending wad due to violations of Supply Chain Management (SCM) rules. During that financial year, a total of 1,173 cases of suspected irregularities related to financial malpractice, fraudulent activities, non-compliance, and theft were investigated. The municipal's forensic department had investigated most of these cases internally and found that they were committed before the financial year 2018/19 (CoJ Annual Report 2018/19).

While the constitutional mandate of local government is essentially to provide sustainable services to communities, by fulfilling this constitutional mandate, municipalities are required to ensure that institutional capacity is strengthened, systems and structures are in place permanently, reviewed from time to time to adapt changing circumstances, and that resources should be taken and allocated for efficient and effective delivery (Koma 2010, 118). Municipalities are legally constituted public entities guided by the noble principles of the constitution, laws, regulations, and ordinances of the country which aim to guarantee the basic human rights of citizens to ensure a normal human life. South African municipalities legally bound to implement the '*Batho Pele*' principles which entail that the people's basic human needs must be put first by government. Meaning that public servants, as the officials entrusted with the duty of serving the public, must put the needs of the people first.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

One of the explanations provided as the motives behind public servants' actions is corruption. Corruption is an important feature in the evaluation of governance and the performance of South Africa's public administration. This is based on the narrative that public servants who prioritize their personal interest, do not comply with the laws and regulations that promote good governance. Corruption is also among the most important demonstration of what is deemed as immoral and unethical conduct in local government (Gildenhys, 2004).

A second, important explanation is procedural oversight, meaning a lack of proper follow-through, or supervision, of a process within an organization. Specifically, in this case, procedural oversight implies improper conduct in the actions of public servants (e.g., decisions, communication and delegation of duties, implementation etc.). In public administration, procedural oversight is not an uncommon process. Public servants do at times lack responsibility of making sure that processes are followed efficiently, effectively, and correctly (Larbi, 2003). In local government, procedural oversight is said to lie mainly on the lack of skills and qualifications required for management positions, ranging from financial management to supply chain management. The researcher will present a detailed justification of the shortcomings of the above explanations in this paper, by arguing that although both these explanations given have merit, they go beyond personal gain or offer the full record, as other factors motivate the behaviour of public servants beyond personal enrichment or procedural oversight due to lack of knowledge and required skills.

This study is crucial for understanding organizational behaviour in relation to institutions, especially since the effectiveness of institutions is said to be a contributing factor to the effectiveness of the organisation. Organisational structure is considered an adaptive mechanism formed in response to the characteristics and obligations of actors, as well as the influence and restrictions of the external environment (Scott, 1987). One cannot understand bureaucratic behaviour without considering the institutions and the structure in which the behaviour takes place, especially with the structure being cyclical, i.e., structure can influence behaviour while bureaucracy can also influence structure (Marasi, Bennett and Budden, 2018). Institutions are classified between formal and informal. Formal institutions are said to be enforced and effective by means of being applied and adhered to. These comprise of rules, laws, constitutions, and

regulations, while informal institutions are unwritten and classified as routines, norms, codes of conduct and social behavioural processes (Skoog, 2005).

According to Weber's ideal type of bureaucracy, rules are a decisive factor in the effectiveness of an organisation. However, with rules comes consequences which are caused by the interaction between rules and people. One of the most important assumption is that rules (laws, regulations, processes etc.,) are social concepts that do not exist without social meaning. This is because rules relate to the requirements of action. The behavioural need of a rule is clear feature, and the behavioural requirement is social, therefore, the rule itself is most often seen as a social deliverable (Bozman and Fanny, 2011). The concept of bureaucracy as Simon (2018) describes it, is a group of public servants who are fully responsible for the administrative activities necessary to carry out government decisions. These actions are characterized by the fact that certain rules and procedures must be followed.

Because rules drive behaviour i.e., through implementation or enforcement, they can lead to behaviours that can see consequences. Since rules exist in some form in organizations, they can also be bent or bypassed, therefore it is important to understand what factors influences these consequences, considering that these rules may not only be formal such as laws and regulations of the organisation, but can also come in a different form than the conventional rules that govern the behaviour of local government officials and determine their choice of actions in particular circumstances.

1.3 RATIONALE

The researcher argues that by firstly understanding what motivates the behaviour and the decision-making of local government public servants in set of circumstances and having a better comprehension of what happens in a public organization from day to day that motivates behaviour and decision-making, will provide us with better insights to how local bureaucracies' function. How public servants determine through interpreting and judging circumstances, how rules and regulations are applied, and bring about change on narratives around public servants being labelled a particular way. By comprehending these and more, we then get to understand that the identity of a public servant plays a significant role in their decision-making behaviour.

But the lessons here are not only specific to South Africa. As part of my analysis, the researcher will draw on broader theoretical work to show how rules and actions, or 'rule rationality', is not a new conception in public administration, but was central to the seminal work by Max Weber

on bureaucracy. Moreover, the researcher will draw on the work of scholars like March and Olsen to better understand how the identities of public servants in local government impacts their decision-making behaviour in certain situations, when it comes to the logic of appropriateness framework.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION

This study sought to answer the following question:

How does identity impact the decision-making behaviour of 'public servants' in situational environments; and what motivates the decision-making behaviour of local government public servants in set of circumstances?

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this research is to investigate how the ideas of identity influence decision-making of public servants in local government and what are the sources of these ideas. As well as understanding why certain rules are adhered to than others when situational environments arise. For instance, how does a senior manager or head of department for electricity or water and sanitation in local government behave in a set of circumstances? To what extent do the notions of identity determine their behaviour as public servants?

1.6 SCOPE OF RESEARCH

To satisfy the objectives of this paper, a case study on public servants employed at the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality will be conducted. This will be done by means of interviews and participation observations of about twelve participants, to achieve an interpretative approach of the research paper. This method will help us also understand on how the day-to-day activities of the participants lead to the decisions they make as public servants. The interviews will be conducted in a semi-structured manner and in unstructured natural flowing conversations, so that participants are in space to narrate freely. In interviewing the public servants, the researcher seeks to understand this situational approach from their perspective.

1.7 STRUCTURE OF THE CHAPTERS

In the following chapters, the paper will be divided as follows; the first chapter will give us an introductory to the research paper. Chapter two will discuss the literature by looking into the existing body of literature. The chapter will explore various concepts and arguments in the current literature that will provide us with better understanding on the concept of identity,

institutional rules, symbolic interactionist theory, and the connection between identity and action. This chapter will also look at two narratives often provided. Chapter three outlines the methodological framework. In the chapter, the researcher will be providing the research design as well as the data collection tools needed for the research. Furthermore, the chapter provides reasons to why the research design and tools used were selected.

Chapter four presents the empirical study collected, in which the profile of the public servants interviewed, and data analyses will be presented. Chapter five incorporates the findings of the study, unpacks the conceptual framework to make meaning to the data collected. Lastly, chapter six concludes the research paper by drawing in the key concerns that have emerged through the research study. Then, the chapter will end by highlighting the new knowledge that the paper has contributed.

1.8 TERMS AND DEFINITION

1.8.1 Public Servant

A public servant can be defined as a person employed in the public sector either by local sphere of government or an agency, to provide public service to its citizens efficiently and fairly. For the purpose of this study, a public servant is employed by government to assist its citizens with the provision of basic services such as water supply, electricity, refusal removal, road repairing, emergency services etc.

1.8.2 Local Government

Local government is a decentralised and lower sphere of government (Cloete 1995, 49). It is a sphere of government that provides public administration of towns or cities and heads the provision of basic services to citizens, a sphere of government that is regarded as the core of service delivery. Local government is broken down into different kinds of municipalities i.e., metropolitan, district, and local municipalities.

1.8.3 Service Delivery

Service delivery is the provision of basic services that benefits the society (Fox and Meyer 1995,118). For the purpose of this study, service delivery is the process where government provides the community with needs such as electricity, housing, water, and sanitation. The provision of such services by mostly local government is as result of various needs to the community.

1.8.4 Municipality

A municipality is a subdivision of a state or a district that functions under local government, with a mandate of providing basic services to its citizens. To satisfy the basic needs of the people with that jurisdiction. Section 151 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa states that a municipality's powers are vested in the mayor and its council, who are elected to govern the municipality.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Much of Organizational behaviour is based on standard operating procedures and they follow standardized operational behaviour because of being rule-based (March 1991, 105). Therefore, a lot of the action of individuals such as public servants is based on routine and the rules that March (1991) calls "appropriate". These rules can either be formal such as codified laws and regulations or they can be uncodified informal rules which are described as 'societal rules' such as traditions, customs, and norms (Helmke and Levitsky 2004). Helmke and Levitsky (2004) argue that though informal rules are mostly unwritten, they structure political life and are greatly enforced outside the bureaucratic authority of the state.

This chapter explores various concepts and arguments in the current literature that will provide us with a better understanding of the identity of a public servant and the situational environments that play a role in their notion of identity. This will then provide a better knowledge of the descriptions that are put forward to understanding what is it that drives public servants to act the way they do, and then provide narratives that are put forward as explanations for these actions.

2.2 THE CONCEPT OF IDENTITY

The concept and theory of identity can be complicated and unclear; however, it plays a central role in social science and the humanities discipline (Fearon 1999, 1). Identity can be defined as the social and personal characters of oneself, distinguishing features that a person views as socially consequential (Fearon 1999, 2).

In identity theory, Stets and Buarke (2000, 224) describe the self as being reflexive because of being able to classify itself in certain ways in relation to other social classifications. They state that this process in identity theory is called identification, and it is through this process that an identity is created. Stets and Buarke (2000) argue that the principle of identity is the classification of the self as 'an occupant of a role'. The expectations associated with the role and performance is integrated, into the self. These meanings and expectations then create a set of standards that guide behaviour (Stets and Buarke 2000).

Burke and Reitzes (1981) posit that the common link between identities and behaviour happens through their mutual frameworks. The basis that one uses to evaluate their identity in a set of circumstances is the same basis used to evaluate their behaviour or action in those same circumstances. A person acts this way because they have this identity on (Burke and Reitzes, 1981). After all, differences in identity occur from 'situational details' (Messik 1999, 4). For instance, having a public servant identity is different from having a parent or spouse identity, so when a public servant is at home or in a different environment their identity switches to adapt to that setting. Each role has its own identity, which contains values, objectives, norms, standards, and interaction styles. Ashforth (2001, 29) states that role transitions are about how one separates their identity from one role and participates in another regardless of whether the roles are held consecutively.

Turner (2012, 342) elaborates that 'by virtue of playing a role, individuals incorporate meanings and expectations associated with this role into their identity in the situation'. Identity theory, grounded in symbolic interactionism, contends that identity is characterized by the diverse social roles that an individual hold. Since every role is related to certain social assumptions, these roles offer structure just as important to human behaviour (Miscenko, 2016, 216). Bourgault and Van Dorpe (2013) explain identity as an intricate concept that classifies role identity as the holder of a specific role, where the literature often differentiates bureaucratic identity with managerial identity or managerial with professional identity. Similarly, Horton (2006) explains identity as a way of capturing one's self-view, this can be done by asking the question "who am I"? She explains that individuals can have multiple identities that are associated with a profession or organization. These identities can lead to a role identity, where seeing oneself as holding a role such as a doctor or public servant (Horton 2006, 534). "Public servants presumably possess the same basic psychological elements that are common to humans in other contexts (Scot 2019, 19).

Meyer et al (2014) argue that new managerial ideas and novel identity elements of public managers are added to public administration, whereas the core identity and frames of reference remain anchored in the traditional bureaucratic logic of the Weberian concept. This is how we can understand the behaviour of administrative officials in the new era.

While the problems of role identification and role definition are largely intellectual challenges, the challenge of ethical decision making for public servants is acute when legitimate role

functions compete. Empirical studies have indicated that "some of management's" challenging problems occur in trying to find a balance between competing factors (van Wart 1996, 526). In general, public perceptions do not recognize the difficulty of ethical decision making in public administration, arising from issues of stakeholders, mandates, providing services for citizens and acquiring resources, therefore, leading to the lack of understanding of administrative behaviour and decision making of public servants. Often, people choose to convey just parts of them to work as this is the message they get from authoritative individuals and institutions. They also intentionally avoid parts of their identities because of fear of the outcomes of bringing themselves fully into organizations (Berg 2002, 401).

On the other hand, Schott, van Kleef and Steen (2016) investigate how they view professional role identity and how this relates to decision-making. Using identity theory, Schott et al., (2016, 22) argue that 'individuals engage in activities that correspond in meaning to the meaning of their identity'. They base their explanation on the concept of 'professional role identity' and define it as the role that an individual play when holding a professional identity (Schott et al., 2016). According to their model, individuals behave in ways that are consistent with the perceptions they bring to their professional role (Schott et al., 2016). They also argue that role identities are self-conceptions that people apply to themselves, as role identity entails that one would need to accept certain expectations accompanying that role.

Horton (2006) and Schott et al., (2016) offer similar references to social identity theory as a focus on the cognitive process of understanding identity. Horton (2006) states that people's sense of being is defined by referring to "we" rather than "I". Schott et al., (2016) indicate that because of the importance of being a member of a group, individuals may seek verification of identities from others. The illustrative case study in this paper will demonstrate some application of social identity theory to the field of public administration and investigate symbolic interactionist theory.

2.3 SYMBOLIC INERACTIONIST THEORY

Symbolic interactionist theories of identity describe the creation of the self-concept as a social process. A process involving role making in the creation of role-related identities (Turner 2012). Symbolic interactionist theory suggests that individuals develop and rely upon social interaction to know what is expected of them in a situation. The theory recognizes the principle of meaning as the center of human action (Aksan et al., 2009). To understand human action, one needs to focus on the efforts that individuals make to maintain their identities (Goffman 1959).

Goffman (1959) also states that because it can be unclear what role a person can play in a situation; this then leads to them having to improvise on their role as the situation unfolds. Another explanation given by Blumer (1986, 183) is that once an individual's identity is deemed 'high' in the salience hierarchy i.e., public servants in managerial positions, the person's actions will become consistent with the expectations of that role identity that is attached to them.

Turner (2012, 355) argues that 'identity verification dynamics are one key to understanding the connection between micro-interactions and macro-social structures.' Social structures that entail prejudice, bias, and stereotypes that individuals must deal with may impact how others view their identity or predict their behaviour (Ho 2007, 2). Therefore, diversity in the workplace creates a complex situation where individuals must alter their interpersonal and group identities (Ho 2007).

The above argument by Ho (2007) opens a question that will also be addressed in this paper of how micro-interactions within the workplace are influenced by social structures, and how actions themselves build from the identity of a public servant, which may affect the environment where the public servant performs their duties. For us to understand human behaviour, we need to first sufficiently understand the meanings and practices taken by humans, such as for purposes, structures, social roles etc. (Aksan et al., 2009).

2.4 ADMINISTRATIVE BEHAVIOUR

Decision-making occurs routinely that organizations and individuals' function under on a day-to-day basis. Decision-making can be understood as an act of choosing alternatives based on the decision maker's views or identities (Torpman 2004). By referencing March (1994), Torpman (2004, 6) argues that in the logic of appropriateness 'situations are identified according to distinct categories; they are matched with the conceptions of identities that decision-makers use in determining appropriate action in a situation, and the matching of identities to situations

results in the allocation of attention and selection of responses appropriate for the prepared identity'.

March's theory suggests that individuals make decisions by classifying the decision and situation with regards to 'appropriateness' and that rules prescribe some form of appropriate action (Messik 1999, 13).

A sufficient understanding of the function of rules and the existence of bureaucracy provides an understanding of how rules affect the behaviour and decision-making of public servants. Rules can be viewed as "essential courses of action that allow little discretion … and do not have a chronological sequence dimension" (Jackson and Adams 1979, 269). They provide authority (Weber, 1947) to act, coordinate, control and make continuous decisions (Jackson and Adams, 1979) and provide standardization (Pugh, 1966). "Institutional theorists pay attention to the truth that rules themselves are important types of resources and that those who can shape or influence them have a valuable form of power" (Scott 1987, 508). They affect the effectiveness of organizations because they "help maintain social order" and provide consistent behaviour to employees of the organization with arbitrary tasks (Jackson and Adams 1979, 271).

North (1990) defines formal rules as 'state enforce' such as judicial systems, legislature, and contacts. While informal institutions are described as 'societal rules' such as traditions, customs, and norms. These rules are mostly unwritten. North (1990) also talks of social institutions and defines them as 'the rules of the game in a society or, more formally, the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction' (North 1990, 3). Helmke and Levitsky (2004) argue that understanding these institutions will make one conscious of the fact that political institutions are not only based on formal rules. Many rules that structure political life are created informally. Formal institutions might provide a more solid theoretical framework when it comes to the state and its bureaucracy, however, informal institutions are greatly enforced outside the bureaucratic authority of the state, even though they are viewed as unwritten rules (Helmke and Levitsky 2004).

However, one needs to take note that informal rules also exist in a bureaucratic setting that involve actors. These are rules that govern behaviour in a more social context (Axelrod, 1986). Literature defines these as norms or set of behaviours allowed or expected by particular social groups (Jackson 1966; Rushing, 1975). Unlike formal rules which are formally enforced in an

organisation and are part of the “bureaucratic control system” (Ouchi, 1980), norms are a form of “social control” and are informally enforced by actors (Feldman, 1984).

Both formal and informal rules are independent systems of governance, as the use of one method can either complement or just change the use of the other (Zenger, Poppo, & Lazzarini, (2001). Pugh (1966) puts it that while rules are in theory tangible attributes of an organization, the response and perceptions of those rules are not. The attitude of individuals in public service towards rules – written or unwritten – or their perceptions can vary and affect the organizational structure. van Wart (1996) claims that individuals that make tough administrative decisions in public services based on the rules of the organisation are those who are faced with multiple legitimate bases to competing for ‘consideration’. “Administrators' decisions cannot be determined to be ethical simply based on the content of their final actions but by the thorough consideration that they give all legitimate values in formulating the best possible decision when various values compete” (van Wart 1996, 532).

On the contrary, Simon (1957) ascribes two key notions when it comes to the theory of administrative behaviour and decision-making. The first being limited rationality, which notes the cognitive limitations of decision-makers. Simon indicates whilst the vast majority are just partly rational in their actions, the remaining part is irrational. Individuals in lower positions settle on choices with higher verifiable components, while those with higher positions make decisions with ‘higher value components. Those at the top make "what" choices and the ones at the bottom make "how" choices. Decisions at the end may only be approved by agreement. The second notion related to the theory that Simon mentions is ‘satisficing’. It is a behaviour that tries to achieve some minimum degree of a specific variable, however, which does not strive to achieve a least some minimum degree of ‘a particular variable’. Lipsky (2010, 10) argues that in public service, the decisions and routines established by bureaucrats such as the supervisors, managers, and policymakers, effectively becomes the public policies they carry out.

Lipsky (2010) argues that bureaucrats join public service as individuals with different and unique life experiences and personalities. He defines this bureaucracy as “public service employment of a certain sort, performed under certain conditions” (Lipsky 2010, 15). He further states that the role of bureaucrats may be considered as a set of expected behaviours, therefore, leading to them being criticized for their inability to provide responsive service (Lipsky 2010, 17). The actions of bureaucrats are consistently reproduced by the behaviour of individuals. “Bureaucratic decision

making takes place under conditions of limited time and information" (Lipsky 2010, 235), therefore, bureaucrats who are decision-makers are typically constrained by the costs of obtaining information that will assist in making better judgments.

Lipsky's work, just like most of the authors in this chapter who outline and address different views around identity and decision-making in organisational or administrative settings, has based their arguments on the theory around these concepts. While I agree with some of the work and explanations provided that identity is valuable in learning more about what drives public servants' decision-making and actions, by measuring decision making in dilemma situations. None of the arguments looks into the relationship between identity and decision-making from the public servants' narratives. While Horton's work highlight role identities from a public sector perspective, but her explanation is solely based on theory and synopsis of what other authors claim.

As previously mentioned, in trying to understand how identity impacts the decision-making behaviour of public servants, the researcher will also look at narratives around public servants being labelled a particular way, and what public administration literature has previously considered a variety of explanations for public servant behaviours, including various inherent and extrinsic motivations. These range from corrupt behaviours and lack of public servants.

2.5 CORRUPTION

One popular narrative provided for the actions that motivate the decisions made by public servants at local government is corruption. Perceptions and accusations of widespread corruption in the South African government have become increasingly prominent over the past decade. Corruption in this sense can mean, among other things, the abuse of power for private gain (Gildenhys 2004), i.e., bribery, embezzlement of funds, graft, fraud, and other illegal dealings that might impede on the process or efficiency of public administration. This type of corruption can occur in public institutions at the national level such as parastatals, at a provincial level like government departments, and local level such as municipalities. As Chipkin (2016, p17) argues that "the role of civil service is to implement the government of the day's policies faithfully and not to develop its own interest. Corruption happens on these terms when civil servants depart from these administrative standards and rules pursue actions that benefit themselves personally, their families or the private associations that they support."

On the other hand, Manyaka and Nkuna (2014) argue that corruption can be defined as the benefit(s) that one gains for themselves or for a group that they are associated with. “Corruption is viewed as a two-way process that involves members of both the public and the private sector, who engage in illegitimate and unethical actions that diminish the country’s economic prospects and degrade social and political institutions” Manyaka and Nkuna (2014, p2). In the context of the public sector, the term corruption refers to the change in the accepted standards with regards to the duties of public servants, for their selfish interests and gains.

The cause of corruption in South Africa is rooted in the country’s bureaucratic traditions, political development, and social history. “The motivation of public sector employees to work hard has been undermined by many factors – declining civil servants’ salaries and promotion unconnected to performances, budget funds, inadequate suppliers and equipment” Pillay (2004, p5). The motive to being honest has also been weakened because of senior officials and political leaders using public office for private gain. South Africa’s complex political design is a contributing factor to the rise of corruption. Manyaka and Nkuna further that it is not situations that are the causes of corruption, but the corrupt mindsets of people. They state that in the public sector the following causes are predominant, “weaker application of the legislation and oversight mechanisms; insufficient Political will; political deployments, low wages, and an absence of meritocratic systems” (Manyaka and Nkuna 2014, p3).

As previously mentioned, corruption can be viewed from various perspectives and the types of corruption may vary, but one form that is predominant in public administration is administrative corruption. This type of corruption is also referred to as maladministration. It may also be seen as a systematic corruption of sound public administration, policymaking, and public service delivery. It may not necessarily be a criminal offence but does carry unethical actions, or it can be both. Such corruption can have the following effects as Gildenhys (2004) puts it, “skew incentives disastrously, undermine voluntary compliance with tax payments, deter investment and render democracy ineffectual” **(**Gildenhys 2004, 251). Explaining administrative corruption cannot always be said in simple terms, as it depends on how one interprets or identifies with the term administration.

In municipalities, the fundamental characteristics in terms of organisational structure and the requirements, political relations, performance management or evaluation tools are not significantly different from those of other government agencies. Corruption is often caused by

the erosion of such relations by individuals (Pillay, 2016). Therefore, ethical behaviour in municipalities is the foundation of honesty and is rooted in accountability. The potential economic and social benefits of those engaging in corruption glorify anomie and criminal counterculture away from the values that uphold integrity, honesty, and moral conduct (Pillay 2016, 118). Large-scale corruption involves transactions involving public servants, politicians, and private entities. The scale relates not only to the value of financial gain but also to the political and administrative credentials of the corrupt people and political parties they represent. In contrast, it is more valuable financially than petty corruption (Pillay 2016).

Some scholars have argued that corruption derives from rational choice thinking, as individuals form the basic unit of analysis and are considered selfish, binding, and rational decision-makers. They make decisions according to personal preference. Johnston (1991) argues that individuals are not driven by irrational factors or emotions, instead, they calculate the performance of specific behaviours in pursuit of their interests, and the creation and outcome of these behaviours are influenced by institutional context (Ostrom, 1986).

A report on the state of local government by the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs report in 2009 identified several issues related to the political administration interface, which led to corruption, inadequate procurement and supply chain, poor financial management and political enmity, which affects the delivery of efficient and effective services at all levels. The findings indicate that in fact the relationship between political and administrative leaders are frequently determined by leaders' access to corrupt relationships with service providers, ultimately leading to a political or administrative corridor that indicates non-compliance, hostility within the party as well as lack of ethics and accountability and support system in the organisation (DCGTA Reprt, 2009).

Woods and Mantzaris (2012, 120) add that the reasons for being noncompliant with municipal finances include the desire to overcome negative market perceptions, a desire for financial gain, the need to demonstrate compliance with accounting rules or to hide the organization's deteriorating financial conditions. In many recent cases, such corruption has taken the form and content of systematic corruption that affects the department or the entire municipality.

The case of the City of Joburg in 2014 revealed that some of the city's commercial buildings had reached an agreement with public servants from the municipality with an amount of R200

million. Government collusion and corruption had robbed the council of millions of Rands that include rates and taxes as managers in various levels of the municipality arranged for non-payment of utilities such as water and electricity (Saturday Star, 2014). The project involved senior as well as middle managers from various departments within the municipality such as finance, supply chain, water, and electricity. For years, the City of Johannesburg municipality has been facing a billing and taxes crisis. The municipality's 2012/2013 financial report indicated that the municipality had lost R1.3 billion of electricity due to such activities, leaving a huge loss of R2 million (Saturday Star, 2014).

Lack of ethics and accountability in leaders often leads to loss, poorly organized, weak, or ineffective organisational systems and structures at critical levels such as human resources, risk management, procurement, and financial management (Pillay, 2016). Then individual or group opportunities for corruption become opportunities for personal enrichment and provoke sedition. Woods & Mantzaris (2012) also adds that the presence of organisational weaknesses in the supply chain and procurement functions, the lack of internal audit and effective control measures opens the gap for those who wish to take advantage of such situations. Consequently, possibilities, mixed with methods of exploitation, make corruption a reality. These weaknesses include an administrative process such as bidding and unaffected control over weak financial management and/or weak internal controls without oversight or accountability.

The likes of Kanyane (2006) and Maserumule (2008) have explored the aspects of these factors when it comes to corruption in local government. They used a variety of research tools to prove how poor financial systems in municipalities contribute to corruption as there is a consensus by researchers that the best aspect of effective local governance is good financial management. However, another theory provided is that poor administration in any given municipality may not necessarily amount to corruption, but a lack of expertise, incompetence, or mismanagement can ultimately lead to corruption.

2.6 PROCEDURAL OVERSIGHT

A second, important explanation given is procedural oversight in local government. In South Africa's public administration, oversight is a constitutionally mandated function of legislative organs of state to scrutinize and oversee executive action and any organ of the state. It follows that oversight entails the structured, strategic, and observant scrutiny exercised by the legislature

with regard to the implementation of laws, the budget, and the strict adherence of statutes and the Constitution. “It entails overseeing the effective management of government departments by individual members of Cabinet in pursuit of improved service delivery for the achievement of a better quality of life for all citizens. In terms of the provisions of the Constitution and the Joint Rules, Parliament has the power to conduct oversight of all organs of state, including those at provincial and local government level” (Nhleko 2005, 8).

As described in the parliamentary outline of the oversight committee in parliament, the notion of oversight encompasses many aspects which incorporate administrative, political, legal, financial, ethical, and strategic elements. The functions of procedural oversight are to notice and prevent abuse, arbitrary conduct, and unconstitutional conduct on the part of the government. Procedural oversight comprises of monitoring the attainment of objectives set by the government's own programmes and by legislation with the aim of improving the transparency of government operations and enhancing the public’s trust, which is itself a form of effective policy delivery, Nhleko (2005, 8).

Along these lines, Larbi, (2003) has argued that efficiency, productivity, effectiveness, and competitiveness are not immediate priorities of the public servants in South Africa. “The public under performs [in South Africa] because state officials pursue their narrow self-interests rather than the public interest. It is therefore difficult to demand accountability and good performance from the public servant because of the monopoly of public services, imperfect information about the services and about the interest of public employees and the huge transaction costs that would be involved in the efforts to write and monitor complete contracts” Larbi (2003, 8).

Over a quarter of the top municipal management of the Gauteng municipality do not have the minimum requirements for their positions (Times Live, 2021)**.** As of March 2020, only 80 of 110 executives were competent, according to the report of the Independent Committee of Inquiry into Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CGA). The report also indicates that only 58% of supply chain managers have the minimum skills required for their jobs. Recent reports from the Auditor-General have revealed that Gauteng municipalities have increased spending from R3.2bn to R4.6bn, mainly because of prior years’ employment contracts (Times Live, 2021).

The concept of “skills” is generally defined as the ability to perform a task with a set time or predetermined outcome. To this end, skills also refer to employees’ ability to work efficiently, effectively, and sustainably (Grindle and Hildebrand 1995, 442). Niaz (2011) adds that skills can

usually be divided into general skills and hematic skills. For instance, around municipal functioning, some common skills include time management, leadership, planning, etc., but domain-specific skills are only useful for specific jobs such as technical services. Municipal vacant positions are an indicator of the level of shortage of qualified candidates to fill these positions.

The annual report of the CoJ (2018/19) states that to equip the upper and middle management levels, the city continues with management and leadership development programs. Skills audit and subsequent identifications of skills required to lead to specific employee development as a priority for the city. These ask to ensure that the skills required to ensure the delivery of professional staff are developed in line with the specific tasks they undertake to ensure added value to the city's objectives.

Cloete (2016) explains that public servants at times tend to find it difficult to comply with regulations that are beyond the technical capacity of the authorities. There is a clear consensus among municipal actors that municipalities do not have active support skills and that municipalities do not prioritize skills development, hence, it is poorly practised within municipalities, and in the event, the audits are done, the interventions are not always in line with the audits (Cloete, 2016).

According to Strydom (2016), South Africa's local government recorded up to 50% of vacant municipal positions. Although some municipalities are concerned about not finding suitable candidates for middle and senior management positions, others have shown mainly vacancies at the grass-root level. The reasons for the unfilled vacancies are mainly promotion and retirement, and the reason for resignation is often to move to another municipality with better rewards. The middle management group needs to be able to perform their work with some guidance from their academic qualifications alongside having experience (Strydom 2016, 6).

2.7 Conclusion

While the authors mentioned in the literature review provide solid ground for understanding the concept of identity and the impact it has on workplace behavioural situations and decision-making, however, none of the explanations adequately engages on the narratives of public servants themselves and how public servants themselves view the notions of identity and how this impacts their decision-making behaviours in situational environments within local government. The explanations by public administration literature about corruption and

procedural oversight being a source to justify the behavioural practices and actions of local government public servants have some merit, however, there is also no clear indication or measure of the extent to which these explanations determine these behavioural practices.

The literature also indicates a lack of empirical study on the topic of identity in local government and the approach of understanding the notion of identity from public servants' perception remains unaddressed. Therefore, this identifies a present need for further development in this area of study, for even the ordinary citizen to have a better comprehension what happens in a public organization from day to day that motivates behaviour and decision-making of public servants.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCION

It is important for the researcher to know how they will achieve the objectives of a research study; therefore, a detailed research methodology is necessary for the study to be carried out in a precise manner (Rajasekar 2013). This chapter provides a description and information of the research process. This includes the method used and the various stages of the research such as the data collection, the selection of participants and the method of data analysis, and it also discusses the validity and limitations of the study.

3.2 THE RESEARCH DESIGN AND PURPOSE

To satisfy the objectives of this research, a qualitative research method was followed to describe the nature of the research method. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), qualitative research focuses on understanding social settings given, it is time-consuming and entails ongoing analysis with regards to the data. Qualitative research is also responsive to ethical concerns; therefore, it includes informed consent decisions (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). This study aimed at investigating a particular way of looking at and deriving meaning on the identity of public servants under investigation.

The objective of qualitative research is to be descriptive and exploratory (Ferreirra, Mouton, Puth, Schurink & Schurink, 1998). This allows the researcher to provide a description of the experiences of the participants and enables readers to understand the meaning attached to the participants' experiences (Meyer, 2001), by being consciously guarded against being biased. This will either sustain or challenge the theoretical assumptions on which the study is based.

A qualitative approach reinforces an interpretation and understanding of intentions underlying human interactions, therefore, for this research study an interpretivist method as used to collect and analyze the data. The research study explored to understand a person's sense of identity that impacts their decision-making and ultimately, their actions. An interpretivist method centers on the way in which human beings make sense of their subjective reality and attach it to meaning.

3.3 RESEARCH METHOD

Qualitative research presents three broad categories of data collection: interviews, observations, and document analysis (Mouton & Marais, 1991). In this study, the key method used for data collection was conducting interviews. The data was collected by means of in-depth interviews with public servants at local government. Potter (1996) argues that a one-one interview method is a valuable tool of data collection as it not only enables the researcher to interact with the participant but also to observe non-verbal signs that might assist with the research study. In this study, the researcher used a prepared questionnaire to interview the participants and recorded the responses of the participants.

The individual interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner, so that participants were in a space to talk freely about how they perceive their job. This method enables the researcher to seek a deeper understanding of the study through dialogue. This approach was adopted to facilitate an understanding of the research study from the perspective of the participants, as a result the data of analysis is reflective of the participants' views. The approach also allows the researcher to have a better understanding of the situation and its complexity, without somewhat imposing prior classification (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

The other method used was that of ethnographic observations i.e., job shadowing and participation observations. As stated by Schensul and LeCompte (1991), ethnographic observation provides exposure into the day-to-day activities of participants. Therefore, this method assisted to also understand on how the day-to-day activities of the participants might influence their assumed identities as public servants.

There are various types of sampling when it comes to conducting qualitative research and usually small samples are often the focus of researchers in qualitative research (Lyell, 1998). The participants in a research study are generally selected according to them be able to provide rich information and descriptions and articulations of their experiences, that will be able to enrich the researcher's understanding (Crabtree & Miller, 1992; Hutchinson & Wilson, 1991). With regards to the sampling method of this study, the researcher selected participants who were willing to share their experiences and contribute to the research study. The researcher initially contacted the municipality's human resources department to get official approval and a lead to the relevant municipal departments.

3.4 RESEARCH SITE

The researcher embarked on a case study of City of Johannesburg public servants, using semi-structured interviews and observations about their work patterns and behaviour. The public servants' perceptions of their own work and the decisions they make were interpreted using the theoretical framework of logics of appropriateness.

The municipality is divided into different departments and units to expedite services for the people of Johannesburg. The reason for choosing this metropolitan municipality is because for some years it has been embroiled with issues around the breakdown of infrastructure, supply of water to households, irregular electricity supply and implementations of by-laws (Nene, 2020). This has led to some residents' associations such as Norwood, having to hire contractors to repair potholes (Cox, 2021).

The municipality states that the implementation of campaigns such as the R10 million #KleenaJoburg will assist with addressing such issues. City of Joburg mayor, Geoffrey Makhubo stated that the campaign has been addressing service delivery issues in the seven regions managed by the municipality (Cox, 2021). Therefore, interviewing public servants who are involved in decision-making in departments that deal with these issues in a municipality that manages several regions, will give us an insight into what it is like to be a public servant and making decisions under these set of circumstances.

The researcher selected twelve public servants who are in departments that deal with decision-making processes like junior and senior managers in departments such as Public Safety, Infrastructure Services, Transportation and Strategic Management Support. The number of participants in this research study was determined by the information provided and the extent to which the research question had been addressed in the first set of interviews, therefore, when the researcher felt that the data had reached a point of saturation, the researcher then took the decision to conclude with the interview process.

The reason for selecting junior and senior managers of various municipal departments was because the researcher wanted to understand how a very specific set of circumstances influence actions and behaviour, and how different situational environments affect perceptions of their roles and actions when making decisions at different levels of management. This also provides insight into understanding how they acknowledge their identity and the actions that influence

making decisions under these set of circumstances, of having to deal with irate residents and protests.

Also, interviewing public servants in this study was crucial in that it provided a spectrum in understanding role transitions of actors in the workplace. Actors sometimes find themselves having to navigate through multiple roles and duties in the workplace and this leads to them having to make complex decisions. Getting to hear a public servant's narrative allows them to discuss their actions, decisions, and behaviours freely. This can be from addressing topics such as career choice in public service and local government, to personal and work-related aspects to understanding how role identity is negotiated. The decision to base this research study on public servants in local government was because this is the level in government where action and decisions taken have some sort of direct impact on the people or communities.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

The researcher transcribed the recorded interviews verbatim, and the identity of the participants was not mentioned on the transcripts. The use of pseudonyms was to protect the identity of the participants and maintain the confidentiality of the whole process. The data was transcribed within 48hours of being collected. This was to allow the researcher to quickly familiarize with the data.

The researcher analysed the data of this study by doing a thematic analysis to sort through the interview results. This type of analysis ensured that the researcher goes through the data systematically and thoroughly and create an easy process to understanding how the researcher reached the various conclusions about the participants interviewed. This has also shown the validity of the results. With the research having been conducted in a semi-structured or inductive approach, the researcher has let the themes arise naturally from the data, therefore, the codes have not been preconceived. This approach aimed to identify patterns of themes and the relationship between them to build a theory (Neuman 2003).

3.6 VALIDITY OF THE STUDY

Qualitative research has been criticized for lacking some credibility compared to quantitative research (Horsburgh, 2003). In quantitative research, the results are consistent over time that shows reliability, while on the other hand, qualitative research relies on various techniques to evaluate and validate itself (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). According to Popey et al., (1998), validity in qualitative research can be viewed by the degree to which the researcher provides

adequate details that will enable the reader to understand what has been presented to them. Horsburgh (2003) and Popey et al. (1998) argue that 'interpretation of subjective meaning' is one of the processes used in understanding the participants' accounts to interpret and analyse data. Thus, validity relies on how the data was collected and on how the data analysis was presented in the study, therefore, transparency is vital in this process. 'In qualitative research, validity is determined by the extent to which the data obtained from the participants has been consistently checked to a point where the data analysis process becomes self-correcting' (Gibbs, 2002; Schurink, 1998). By the researcher discussing the research methodology, data collection and analysis processes in this chapter validate the processes of the research study.

The validity of this study was in line with the theoretical framework which aimed at focusing on identifying the constructions by the participants. During this study and throughout the interview process, the researcher was on the lookout for any evidence that would have been irrelevant to the research question or became repetitive. Stability in the findings was due to the consistency in the answers that were provided by the different participants. Stability in qualitative research is also a method of indicating validity in a research study (Burns, 2006). It refers to the trustworthiness of data and whether the observations are repeatable during the process (Gibbs, 2002), therefore, to ensure that the data is stable, the researcher needs to reflect time and again on the objectives of the study.

3.7 ETHICS

Given the nature of this research study, some ethical considerations needed to be considered, as the study involves human research participants. The data was conducted by means of semi-structured individual interviews and ethnographic observations. The research participants were public servants in managerial positions from the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality in Gauteng. Formal permission was obtained from the human resources department of the municipality and the participants, before the study could be conducted.

Confidentiality of matters discussed during the interviews was assured, as information of participants was not directly disclosed in the research, however, anonymity was not guaranteed as some colleagues within the municipality were aware of the interviews conducted. A consent form that stipulates that the information provided by the participants may be used anonymously was completed by the participants before the research study could be conducted. The data

collected was stored under pseudonym in a protected digital form with all identifying features removed.

The data collection method involved a minimal risk category. This is because questions about the participants' lives, activities and opinions do not include biographical information that might appear to be sensitive. All participants were treated with courtesy, respect, and sensitivity. There was also no physical, social, economic, or legal harm incurred by the participants. Lastly, there participants were notified that there will be no personal costs to them if they were to participate in the research study and that they may withdraw at any time or not answer questions they did not feel comfortable with answering at the time.

3.8 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The limitations of the study are constraints on one's ability to conduct the study as initially planned or the unanticipated encounters emerging during the study (Price and Murnan, 2004). The scope of this research study is subject to some limitations. Besides the theoretical concepts written around the topic, there seemed to be a lack of case studies conducted and there is very little prior research on this specific topic. This enables and identifies new gaps in the literature and presents the need for further development in this area of study.

As part of the research study, the researcher had included job shadowing in the methodology of the study. This was to provide support to the ethnographic observations and the exploration processes in general. However, due to the current global Coronavirus pandemic, the methodology of this study had slight limitations as some participants were working from home due to lockdown regulations that the municipality had put in place. This had caused a constraint with regards to conduct ethnographic observations of the participants in their work setting, as some participants were not available for one to conduct observations of their day-to-day operations in the workplace. However, agreeing to a sit-down interview for the study.

3.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter has outlined the explanation for the choice of research methodology used in this research study. This was done by providing a description and information of the research process, using qualitative methods to collect the data through interviews and observations. A case study was also discussed and the process of how the data from the study conducted will be

analyzed was also highlighted. Lastly, the chapter elaborated on ethical considerations, the validity, and the limitations of the research study.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher presents the findings of the data collected from interviews that were conducted on the public servants. The findings are presented in relation to the objectives of the research study and that are conducted to answer the research question: how does identity impact the decision-making behaviour of 'public servants' in situational environments? The chapter aims to present the findings in accordance with the methods described in the previous chapter. The general results and observations are included to contextualize the findings obtained.

The data was collected through semi-structured interviews and observations with public servants in the City of Johannesburg (CoJ) Metropolitan Municipality. The research aimed to examine the following questions:

- What kind of idea do public servants have about identity and the impacts it has on their behaviour?
- Does the notion of identity influence how public servants run the day-to-day operations of the department?
- Does one's identity in the role of a manager determine the actions one take towards certain situations? If so, in what manner?
- Does a public servant ever find themselves in a position where they must improvise on how they view their identity, as a particular situation unfolds?

4.2. CATEGORIES OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Twelve participants were interviewed for this study. Out of the twelve participants, seven were senior managers while the five were in junior managerial positions. The participants were from six different departments within the City of Johannesburg metropolitan municipality, with various years of experience in local government. This was done after the researcher had obtained permission from the municipality to conduct interviews and observations at their offices. An

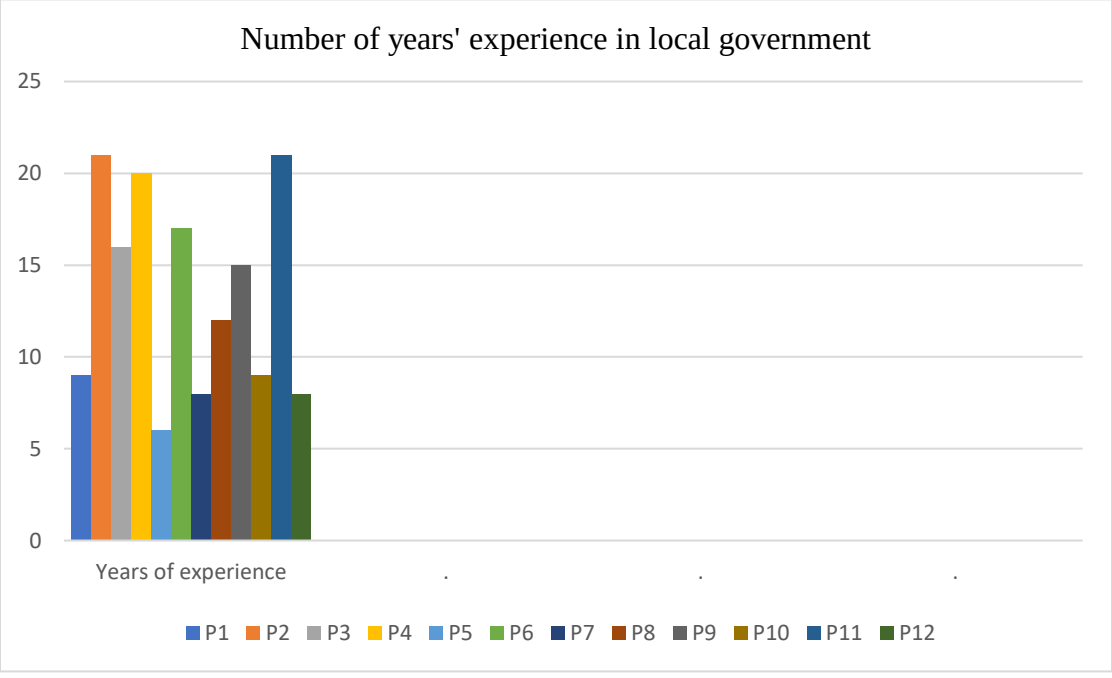
information sheet was provided to the identified participants and a consent form was also provided confirming that matters discussed during the interviews will be confidential.

Table 4.2 Category of Participants

Numbers	Managerial Level	Years in Local Government
5	Junior managers	3 – 10 years
7	Senior managers	10 – 30years

Table 4.2 provides data on the categories of the participants interviewed according to their managerial level and the years that they have served in public service, particularly in local government.

The researcher had discovered after interviewing 12 interviewees that the data that was collected was now saturated. This meant that interviewing more participants would not necessarily contribute to new information as similar responses were given by the interviewees.



As demonstrated on the chart, the majority of the interviewed participants in the local government sector had over ten years, with three participants serving in different departments of local government for twenty plus years. Five participants had less than ten years of experience in local government.

The researcher analyzed the data of this study by doing a thematic analysis to sort through the interview results. This type of analysis ensured that the researcher goes through the data systematically and thoroughly and create an easy process to understanding how the researcher reached the various conclusions about the participants interviewed.

4.3 PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

As discussed in chapter one of this research study, the objective of this study is to investigate how identity impacts the decision-making behaviour of public servants in a set of circumstances, in the context of local government. Using public servants in the City of Johannesburg (CoJ) municipality as a case study, the researcher will firstly look at identity from a public servant's narrative and how they describe and perceive it, this will then lead to why certain decisions are taken by public servants in specific circumstances. Lastly, the researcher will try to get an understanding *of the source* [motives?] of action for public servants. *Public servants' actions are often seen as deviations* from the rules and regulations of the municipality when *they are* faced with a particular set of circumstances.

The narratives of the participants that were part of this research study help provide a different outlook and detailed insight into the relationship between identity and decision-making. The data highlights several complexities experienced by the participants interviewed at the municipality, stemming from the thematic analysis of participants' experiences substantiated with direct quotes from the participants. The themes were identified in line with the research study's objectives as follows:

- Identity from a public servant's viewpoint
- Being a manager in local government
- Rules and Decision-Making Behaviour.

4.3.1 IDENTITY FROM A PUBLIC SERVANT'S VIEWPOINT

From the interviews that were conducted for this study, the narrative by the public servants is that identities shape the role that individuals play when within the workplace. Within the municipality, there was consensus on what is the identity of a public servant. The identity of a public servant was described as when one is aligned with a self-concept that is work-based and the creation of a combination of institutional and occupational characters that shape ways in which one behaves. For most of the participants interviewed, their understanding of the concept was similar, making use of words like 'beliefs, values, distinguishing characteristics and one's being' that a person holds relative to their profession and role.

In a few accounts when describing their own understanding of identity, a majority of the participants related it to the role one plays at work. Their description is that public servants must be responsible; they have to meet expectations and take accountability for the actions in the role that they play. One cannot give a detailed description of identity without making use of the word 'role' as the two themes complement each other. One of the participants stated that they came into the role of a manager in public service because for them it was a calling. It was a calling for them whereby they had been called into serving the people. This meant that their identity aligns with the role of a public servant that requires them to serve the community.

Participant 3: "*My identity when I get to work transitions to that of a manager and an employee of CoJ. The next person may see my behaviour and acts as those of a person called to serve the residents of the CoJ. When I make a decision, I must first think of the role that I have been employed to present, and that is to be a servant to the people".*

Several participants added that providing a precise definition of identity is a bit complicated as one's identity does not only rely on you and how you try to represent it, but also on the way public servants are viewed by people. One is not just a public servant when they are only at work or on duty. The identity of a public servant is carried by those individuals throughout. This is because the narrative around public servants is that they are here to serve the needs of the people. Therefore, if the community has issues around water supply, for instance, a manager in that relevant department may be called by that area's ward councillor to get the issue solved, even if that manager is no at work or it is after their normal municipal operating hours.

Participant 8: "*As a manager in a department that provides a certain service to the community, one's role is not just a 9-5 one. The call of duty can happen at any day or hour. Hence, one*

needs to time and again remind themselves that they took up a role that calls for action and decisions to be taken at any hour".

Participant 11: *"With the years I've been in local government, I have come to realize that it's easy for people to criticize you if things don't go with the efficiency that they require them to. Being a manager of a department that offers a service to the residents of Johannesburg requires you to have great knowledge of the role and responsibilities that come with that role. If not, your competency will be questioned, your interests will be questioned, and this might have a negative connotation on your identity as a public servant".*

Another explanation was that as a public servant you have multiple identities that may have their own distinct needs and expectations. When at home, one is a parent and a partner so their identities interchange with being a public servant. Therefore, their actions and decision-making will vary when it comes to role transitions between work, family life or other social and recreational activities. Because of the multiple identities, decision-making and one's actions could be influenced not only by formal rules i.e., laws or regulations, but informal rules such as beliefs, customs, and norms. Depending on the set of circumstances, these informal rules may be applied not only at home but also in local government as a manager.

The majority of the participants mentioned that as a manager one plays a leadership role that is influenced by their 'work' identity. One of the explanations provided was that one needs to be a good leader that is going to define situations that will ultimately articulate the municipality's objectives because good leadership influences the behaviour of individuals for the benefit of the organization. The narrative was that a leader is someone that others can trust. She/he must be not just be experienced but confident and understand the importance of official regulations being implemented. A good leader must also be controlled by strong demand for accountability; therefore, they must consider the implications of morality when making decisions and enforce the municipality's regulations to avoid any negative consequences or mistakes that may arise from not complying with the regulations. They must not carry rigid knowledge but continue to learn to be better for the benefit of the municipality and the people it is of service to.

Two senior managers stated that they viewed their identity as a public servant as having to encompass some sense of duty. That as a public servant, you must have some duty that compels you to behave in a certain way. Because a public servant who believes that his or her calling is to serve is more likely to try and behave in a more ethical way or will not be influenced by external

factors that are not aligned with the policies of the municipality when faced with situational predicaments. This kind of public servant will be able to make decisions that are aligned with the situation at hand without having to break the rules or compromise their identity.

Participant 11: *"A person's leadership skills will sharpen with the number of years and experience. Being a public servant for close to two decades will sharpen your knowledge and improve your skills. Now and again circumstances in the municipality will test you and your qualities as a leader, so one needs to know the character and their purpose as a leader in the department/ municipality and as a 'servant' to the community".*

Some of the participants made a sharp distinction between being a leader and a manager. By stating that being a leader means guiding actions and opinions of those you lead to doing the right things, while a manager involves taking responsibility, performing tasks with efficiency. Participant 11 added that being a good leader is an extension of your identity are as a manager. That as a manager in public service you need to be conscious of the fact that your identity and the role that you hold as a manager is one that can be easily scrutinized by the public. Your identity can be easily misunderstood if you do not have a clear understanding of your responsibilities and your role, not just as a manager of a municipal department by as a public servant in local government.

For most of the public servants that were interviewed, their perception of identity speaks not only to just being a great and competent leader but to ethical reasoning, adapting to complexity, and being able to perceive situations as others do. Identity to public servants speaks to a self-view of the expectations associated with the role that is linked to them, which at times bring challenges to ethical behaviour and decision-making when legitimate role functions compete.

4.3.2 BEING A MANAGER IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

A public servant's management style speaks a lot to their identity as a public 'leader' ((Miscenko 2016, 211). The managerial style of the head of a department will have a significant influence on the process of decision-making in that department and the municipality. What became clear from the participants is that as experienced managers, making decisions that require juxtaposing their responsibility to comply with the municipality's rules with the need to do what they consider 'appropriate' is part of their daily duties.

Participant 2: *"My role as a manager involves making a decision that is aligned with the municipality's policies and regulations. Compliance is very important in the role that I play, but*

I cannot deny that I sometimes find myself faced with situations that need me to apply my own logic and that involves taking my identity as a public servant into account, by deciding on what I deem is right".

Participant 7: *"When a public servant makes a decision that is not in accordance with the policy framework of CoJ, it is not always because that person is deliberately being noncompliant to the organisation or trying to peruse their own agenda or personal interest. It could also be a matter of trying to figure out the best solution for a problem that requires some urgency and is not going to be resolved by the laws and regulations of the department".*

The explanation given by some of the participants was that the rules and regulations of the municipality are important in that they facilitate decision making and the behaviour of public servants in recurring situations. They solve problems of coordination between public servants and provide standard solutions to recurring problems of social interaction with the community too. However, there are times when public servants do not comply with these rules and choose to follow alternative paths that they deem as appropriate ways of resolving situational problems. This is what might give people the impression that public servants are just mere noncompliant to the rules and regulations of the municipality, without understanding the reasoning and motive behind some decision-making behaviours of those in local government.

The majority of the participants did not shy away from the fact that each manager has their own characteristics and discretion that comes to play when making decisions. For instance, a lenient manager will create an atmosphere that is relaxed and that might be more customed to applying informal rules in decision-making processes because this reflects the kind of person that they are. Such as being flexible, compassionate, or rational in their decision-making, because the decisions that they make matches their preconception of who they are. Whilst, on the other hand, a manager with a more rigid management style, might make decisions that are aligned with traits of a firm person. When they execute their actions, they bind their identity to that decision. Senge (1990) explains that when it comes to one's management style, better management comes from knowledge which includes personal mastery and understanding one's self-concept.

When junior managers were asked about how micro-interactions within local government influence the social structures that may influence their actions and decision-making, the majority of the participants mentioned that decision-making is mostly influenced by the views, beliefs and preferences managers develop in the workplace. As managers who are in junior managerial

positions, at times their actions are influenced by senior officials or heads of departments, especially if one regularly reports directly to that senior official. In cases of resistance, then circumstances may result in negative attitudes and actions.

Participant 6: *"Being someone who holds a junior managerial role can sometimes be a challenge. You are in a role that requires you to lead others, however, on the other hand, your decision-making capabilities are limited and in most instances are also influenced by a person who holds a senior managerial role".*

When the same question was posed to senior managers who participated in the interview process, a majority expressed concerns over the influence of political powers within the municipality. The main concern was that people with political power may try undermining the decisions they take as senior managers and try to influence their actions towards certain decisions or preferences. Managers with fifteen or more years of experience within local government had gotten accustomed to the fact that the political influence of politicians plays a huge role in decision-making processes on the day-to-day operations of the municipality. The failure of one to act on instructions given by senior political leaders may lead to an unpleasant working environment or even removal from one's position. This notion of political interference in the municipality's operations was a common narrative amongst the participants.

Participant 6: "*There is growing concern about the structure of local political parties and the inadequate relationship with the municipality. This is exacerbated by improper political interference by political parties. There are instances where regional party structures seek to control the operation of the municipality*".

Numerous reports on corruption and fraud in local government indicate unjustified interference by political office-bearers, this causes a state of turmoil at the municipality whereby party office-bearers want to populate the administration of the municipality. The majority of senior managers revealed that they have experienced or have been in situations where their decision-making had been influenced by the interference of those who do not have direct authority over the daily operations of the municipality but have enough political power to influence decisions. When in these situational environments, managers tend to consciously diverge from complying with the legal process of the municipality by entertaining informal institutions to influence their decision-making.

An additional challenge identified by the participants is that managers do not have much influence in policy-making processes, citing that it is sometimes challenging to act on policies that are created by individuals who are not in the position to carry them out on the ground. Participant 9: *"Managers are people who were appointed on the basis of their knowledge and experiences, therefore, they should be able to exercise influence on policies which they are left to implement in their respective departments".*

Policies are created to guide decision-making and they affect everyone in the community in some way or the other. They take the form of governing ideologies, principles, and courses of action. Thus, the failure of managers to have the right information can impede decision-making in local government (Boshoff, 2008). The participants were also of the view that the influence of managers in policy-making processes will assist in combating the challenges encountered in the day-to-day operations of the municipality, that range from political aims, financial means, and abilities of the personnel.

Participant 3: *"It is not always the case that a public servant will not comply with the rules and regulations of the organisation because of personal interest or political influence. Sometimes the policies that entail these rules and regulations do not relate to the situations we find ourselves in reality. This will then lead to a person having to rely on their own judgement to make a decision".*

It became clear that such circumstances create behavioural norms to emerge and deal with recurring situational problems that cannot be controlled by the rules and regulations of the municipality. These behavioural norms are adaptions to the rules and regulations, as these problems occur as a result of non-compliance.

Informal institutions are then treated as an exogenous force that changes the benefits of using an alternative formal structure, while formal institutions are treated as a mere functional alternative to the informal elements that govern municipalities. Understanding these institutions will lead to one being conscious of the fact that political organizations are not only based on formal institutions (Helmke and Levitsky,2004). Many of the rules that structure political life are created informally. Formal institutions might provide a more solid theoretical framework when comes to a state and its bureaucracy, however, informal institutions are greatly applied outside the bureaucratic authority of the state, even though they are viewed as unwritten rules (Helmke and Levitsky, 2004).

For most of the participants, choosing informal rules to deal with situations in a formal organisation such as a municipality may be seen as just an alternative to problem-solving that will make things seem easier going forward easier. However, it is still seen as being non-compliance to the rules and regulations of the municipality by intentionally selecting informal rules over those of the municipality. There are many factors that can contribute to such actions. The complexity of making important decisions involves sometimes being bias, risk aversion, political factors, and emotions. These are some of the factors that may affect the decision-making behaviour of public servants to consciously select informal rules over those of the organisation.

When public servants in managerial roles are tasked with making decisions that affect the municipality, what would be considered as the initial processes to follow is them making a decision that is in line with the policies or the regulations of the institution, however, some public servants find themselves making decisions that are not complying with the laws and regulations of the municipality. When operational processes are not followed accordingly, then they find themself in a predicament. There are consequences to these actions, so when proper processes are not followed, they create weak municipal systems that then give rise to poor service delivery.

4.3.3 RULES AND DECISION-MAKING BEHAVIOUR

The findings of this study also revealed that the decision-making behaviours of public servants in the municipality are also shaped by rules that are appropriate to the situations they encounter in their roles as managers. They try to match the facts of the situation with the appropriate rule to provide a solution to that situation. The appropriate rule(s) can be regulations and by-laws of the municipality, or it can be the norms and beliefs of the person applying the rule(s). Public servants act by trying to connect the type of situation and the type of person they see themselves as in resolving the situation and match that to the appropriate rules.

The participants stated that consciously or not, they deal with organizational rules at all levels daily. This interaction with the rules has a huge impact on their actions as public servants. To them, rules are an indicator of power and deviating from them may mean that the objectives behind them can no longer be met. However, public servants do face challenging times interpreting the appropriate rules for the specific situation. They encounter struggles with how to classify who they are and what the classifications imply in a specific situation, due to several situational environments and competing behavioural prescriptions.

Several of the participants mentioned that the reality of most public servants is that their authorities will from time to time be undermined by political leaders who influence the decision-making processes of local government. The pressure will be on them the public servants to act or sway things to benefit those with power and influence in government. This then causes them to improvise and bypass the laws and regulations of the municipality. This is what Viljoen (1987, 52) calls 'politicization of the public administration exerted by politics.'

Besides the common narrative that public servants deviate from rules or bypass regulations due to corruption personal gain, the majority of the participants stated that their decision-making behaviours are at times influenced by "pro-social rule-breaking". For instance, wanting to assist a service provider or even a colleague in a situation whereby one will have to deviate from the organization's set of rules because they view the actions they take and the situation as benefiting the organisation in its own way. Morrison (2006) states that "pro-social rule-breaking" occurs in any case in which an employee deliberately violates formal policy, regulation, or formal prohibition of the organisation with the intentions of helping people or organizations. This occurs when a conscious decision is made to deviate from the rules.

The participants argued that public servants deviating from rules and regulations are sometimes not exclusive because of self-interested motives but positively intended acts. Not complying or deviating from the rules can be motivated by a desire to do a better job or to do what one thinks is appropriate. Like any form of risky discretionary behaviour, this type of rule-breaking reflects a conscious choice (Ashford, Rothbard et al., 1998). The public servant must decide whether to follow the rules or select an alternative path when faced with a particular circumstance.

Participant 11: *"We sometimes diverge from the rules and regulations of the municipality because as human beings we from time to time include emotions when making decisions. Especially in an environment that comprises dealing with people. I might not be in customer service, but my department is part of the division that provides emergency services to the community. Therefore, your judgement on things may be over clouded by personal norms when in dealing with people's lives".*

Some of the examples provided by the participants described situations where speed was critical and the respondents at the other end of the spectrum felt it would take much time to follow the right channels and comply with regulations and therefore threaten the municipality's organisational objectives, for instance, department deadlines not being met. One participant

described a situation where she evaded her chain of command to add two junior public servants to meet a deadline covering the additional staff assigned to the project. Another participant gave an example of having had to inform a division in their department of an upcoming audit, with the rationale that they needed to assist this division because of the amount of pressure they were under to meet the high objectives of the department.

These types of actions and decisions pull the municipality in different directions as they promote the existence of distinct environments within the organisation and create a failure for public servants to act in a uniform manner, which could be highly problematic, not only for the public servant but the municipality. The participants added that if another public servant discovers that a colleague was involved in pro-social rule-breaking, then chances are they might want to follow suit and perform such an act. This indicates that even with risks or implications to such decisions, or indications that a particular rule has been broken in the past by other public servants, this will still increase the likelihood of another public servant doing the same act and breaking the rule with the intentions of having the municipality's interests. This shows that the setting of the organisation has some influence on how bureaucratic structures give way to unintentional consequences of rules

Participant 5: *"It is common for a public servant to act or make decisions that will deviate from the rules of the municipality because of advice given by a colleague who has gone through the same situation. As colleagues, we sometimes share work experiences and challenges. This may result in me following the advice of a colleague on how they acted when they were in the same situation".*

The distinction between rule-breaking and pro-social rule breaking is that the former is characterized as "concern and compassion", while the latter as "selfish" (Morrison, 2006, 13). Morrison (2006) states that pro-social rule-breaking is related to proactive empathy, agreeableness, and individuals who are high risk-taskers and are low in conscientiousness are more likely to engage in such behaviour (Dahling et al., 2012). Researchers on PSRB have acknowledged the probability that employees that are motivated pro-socially might choose to deviate from organisational rules to achieve beneficial behaviours.

Participant 9: "*People sometimes forget that we are not only public servants, but we are also humans, and we carry compassion with us. My behaviour is not only influenced by performance*

or numbers, but by also carrying out my tasks with compassion for the communities that I serve".

The accounts of the public servant that were part of this study, suggests that the reality of daily choices in the municipality requires them to either comply with the municipal rules or to deviate in the interest of efficiently responding to perceived demands tasks, stakeholders, residents, or even political influence. These are workplace demands that motivate such behaviours from the public servants and may impact their ideas of identity. What came out from the public servants is that rules in the workplace do indeed reduce uncertainty and doubt when having to carry out a job, all in the interest of the municipality as a whole, the different departments within the municipality, and the employees. Therefore, complying with the municipal rules is a way of simplifying decision-making or reducing complexity when having to act.

Using provided rules and not having to make a new decision in every situational environment, public servants argue that better efficiency in local government can be achieved. This not only benefits municipalities, but public servants can also benefit from organisational knowledge that is written in rules. However, these written rules can also be restrictive because of their nature as instruments of organisational control. These rules at times reduce freedom of action, neglect the aspect of human agency, they no longer suit that particular situation or due to circumstances changing. It is these aspects that lead public servants to deviate from them and consider adopting informal rules into situational environments to ensure efficiency in the municipality, regardless of how their actions may influence formal or written rules.

4.4 CONCLUSION

The researcher's objective in this chapter was to present the findings of the study, by investigating how the ideas of a public servant's identity influence their actions. As well as understanding the motives behind the decision-making behaviour of public servants at the municipality that leads to them deviating from the rules and regulations of the municipality when situational environments arise.

The findings presented in this chapter provided a descriptive narrative on how the public servants who participated in the study understood the ideas of identity, their narrative of the identity of a public servant. The findings also presented an insight into how the identity of the public servants influences their decision-making behaviour as managers at the City of Johannesburg municipality, by the type of managerial style and leadership characteristics the public servants

portray. Lastly, the findings revealed rule deviation by public servants, which is often referred to as a form of noncompliance or breaking of the rules, is not only motivated by public servants' self-interests, but also because pro-social rule breaking which are acts that might be beneficial to the organisation in one form or another. This entails that a public servant acts on the basis of the rules that are appropriate to their current situation, by matching rules to the situation. Their perception of what is appropriate in a particular situation and that determines their decision-making behaviour in a situational setting, is affected by the nature of the rules themselves or the contents of the rules. These rules may not be formal rules such as regulations and laws of the municipality but be informal rules such as personal norms and beliefs of what they deem appropriate for the particular situation.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE ANALYSIS OF THE FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses and interpret the key findings of this study, with the literature as presented in chapter two and the synthesis of the research findings found in chapter four. The chapter unpacks the conceptual framework to make meaning to the data collected. The researcher will draw on the work of scholars like March and Olsen to better comprehend how the findings of this study impacts our understanding of the identity of public servants when it comes to the logic of appropriateness framework. The chapter will also continue with a thematic structure that was presented in the previous chapter.

5.2 THE LOGIC OF APPROPRIAENESS FRAMEWORK

The Logic of Appropriateness (LoA) framework seeks to help one understand that identity determines public servants' actions by following a different kind of reasoning. Asking questions such as, what kind of person am I? what kind of situation am I in? how appropriate are the different options for acting based on my role? All these questions are based on the logic to do the most appropriate thing in that given situation. March (1994) argues that situations are matched with the conceptions of identities that decision-makers use in determining appropriate action and the matching of identities to situations results in the selection of responses appropriate for the prepared identity. Action can be defined as an instance of behaviour that is associated with an intention (Vershueren 1998). According to March's LoA, decisions is made as a result of matching rules to situations. The LoA embodies a decision-making approach that is based on a common sense rule intended for solving a problem (March 1994).

March and Olsen (1995, 30) explain that 'political actors i.e., public servants, act and organize themselves in accordance with rules and practices that are socially constructed, publicly known, anticipated and accepted'. Public servants try to achieve 'obligations encapsulated in a role, an identity, a membership in a political community or group, and the ethos, practices, and expectations of its institutions' (March and Olsen 2004, 478) According to March and Olsen's LoA framework, human action is rule-based. The action of individuals occurs within these rules and practices. It is rules that guide the actions of individuals in making decisions. These actions

involve ‘evoking an identity or role and matching the obligations of that identity or role to a specific situation’ (March and Olsen 1998, 951).

The findings of this research study revealed that public servants act according to the rules that they deem appropriate in that situational environment. Now, these rules which they consciously choose depends on what the situation is. The finding also revealed that these rules might not always be those complying with the municipality, such as municipal regulations and codes of conduct. These rules may also be informal rules that they deem appropriate in that particular situation. It was clear from the narratives of public servants that participated in the study that rules not only play an important part in the daily operations of the municipality, but also in public servants’ attempt to fulfil the obligations that come with their identity as local government officials.

What has also been revealed in the findings was that public servants’ interaction with rules does not always lead to dire consequences or cases of corruption but does have an impact on the behaviour of public servants. Whether formal or informal, rules act as a way to control, exert authority while also providing decision making. In the LoA framework, all rules that influence one’s behaviour are considered. Acting appropriately means acting according to the institutionalized practices of the collective and mutual understanding what is right, rational, reasonable, and good.

The participants in this research study were unambiguous about the notion that their multiple identities require them to behave differently, depending on the public service task at hand, or the relationship involved. One participant stated that being a mother comes with its expectations and behavioural needs, which is different from being a public servant or that of being a member of society. By understanding role transitions, one gets to understand why individuals behave and make certain decisions in situational settings that they would not have made in another setting. This explanation indicates that as a public servant, your identity will most likely determine and prompts your actions or behaviour to be a certain way, depending on the situation you are in. According to McCall and Simmons (1978), identity helps an individual’s position to facilitate interaction, guidance, development of strong social relationships. All this is in the context of their social structure because the roles that individuals hold are shared expectations of social positions in society. For instance, participant 3 stated that as a public servant, their role includes “being a servant for the community”, whose actions must match the meaning by building and

enhancing government credibility, legitimacy, and people's trust, and when they transit to the role of a parent, their identity will encompass that of being a parent. Therefore, their decision-making behaviour will be according to what they deem 'appropriate' in the role of a parent. This takes us back to understanding behaviour and the logic behind making decisions as explained in the LoA framework, which suggests a strong connection between a public servant's sense of who they are in a particular role and their choice of action or behaviour in that role.

The reason for focusing on March and Olsen (1989) LoA, is that the theory opposes the notion provided in the Rational Choice Institutionalism (RCI), which argues that actors base their decisions on self-interest that will be of greatest benefit to them. Actors in RCI have a set of preferences, therefore, their actions are strategically based on attaining those preferences. Their decision-making behaviour is influenced by extensive calculations. The findings revealed that in most situations, public servants make decisions that are value-based and not necessarily on economic value. Because many decisions are based on the notion of identity rather than that of rationality. For instance, some of the public servants explained that the reason they sometimes deviate from rules and regulations is not because of self-interested motives but positively intended acts. Not complying or deviating from the rules can be motivated by a desire to do a better job or to do what one thinks is appropriate at the time. The LoA emphasizes the idea of acting according to an actor's perceived role, regardless of values or personal preferences. Hence, personal interests are not a significant factor and play a lesser role when it comes to the LoA. Because its framework implicitly rejects the notion that individuals make decisions based on only rational choices.

Esen (2013) claims that the LoA is based on the notion that normative beliefs make action appropriate under certain settings as well as inappropriate under others, and that the types or forms of appropriateness are put in place by actors themselves under institutional positions. Esen (2013, 2) claims that some scholars of identity consider public servants to act in accordance with rules that are socially made, accepted and publicly known. He considers the explanation as not connecting action exclusively to anything and that such explanations can be characterized as being embed in those who support the LoA. The insinuation from his argument is that even when public servants engage in noncompliance with the organisational rules, they still comply with some form of rule they feel fits the specific setting. This is a cautious selection of rules that make

decision-making on their end seem uncomplicated. The reason for this is that rules whether formal or informal, have an enormous influence over an individual's actions.

However, what the findings revealed is that public servants do sometimes find it difficult to interpret which action is relevant to that current situation. They find it difficult to classify themselves and others, from an identity perspective, and which classification will imply in a particular situation. Though the LoA suggests that public servants seek to fulfil the duties of their role by opting for decision-making behaviour that is appropriate to a particular situation, at a point in time within that institution. This problem arises when several institutions that are structured in different ways provide competing behavioural prescriptions within the same area of action. The narratives from some of the public servants were that not all decisions that are made can be easily taken on the basis that they are appropriate to that particular situation, especially when there are conflicting motives. For instance, a public servant may want to apply regulations of the municipality to a situation because he identifies it as being appropriate, but because of political influence from a senior leader, then they would decide to go with an alternative action to the situation. Similarly, when public servants choose not to be compliant with the rules of the organisation, it is on the basis that decision-making can be understood as an act of choosing alternatives constructed on the decision maker's views or identity at the time.

The theoretical explanation of how public servants relate to and are affected by rules seems to depend on the context in which they make decisions. Public servants are not comprehensive decision-makers. The decisions that they make are in isolation from each other. These are made without knowing the full impact they may have on subsequent decisions. This then leads to them focusing on the most important aspects of the situation when choosing between alternatives (Hindmor, 2006). The researcher also discovered that personal values play a role in decision-making, but a further examination of how and to what extent requires a deeper understanding of the complexity of interactions between institutions and public servants. Because the LoA does not primarily refer to morals, rather LoA's main feature is matching rules to situations. These could be regulations, legislature, or norms. These are situations that public servants connect to appropriate means of complying with the relevant rule. The rule may not necessarily be a formal rule, an informal rule may apply to this reasoning too.

According to Helmke and Levitsky (2004), many rules that structure political life are created informally. Formal rules might provide a more solid theoretical framework when it comes to the

state and its bureaucracy, however, informal ones are greatly enforced outside the bureaucratic authority of the state, even though they are viewed as unwritten rules. This argument contributes to understanding the research on compliance and behaviour in the workplace. Because informal rules, as the findings of this study revealed, may at times play a significant role in determining the actions chosen by public servants.

What also came out from this study is that when identities differ from one public servant to the next, they can compete with institutional belongings because of the internalized factors that contribute to their individualities in institutional settings. This could be from the junior managers to the senior managers, and these factors can range from education, socialization to ordinary everyday work situations. An explanation provided by Bourgault and Van Dorpe (2013) is that public servants act in certain ways because of the multiple roles that they play simultaneously, this is due to the various components and complexities of their job, and the institutions involved, therefore, making it difficult to conform to specific identities. Identities not only seek to establish the distinctiveness of human beings, but also helps us understand how individuals are connected to different aspects of social structures, hence being organized according to three bases; group, role, and personal identities (Burke & Stets, 2009).

According to Weber (1946) and the 'ideal type, bureaucrats are goal-oriented individuals designed rationally to efficiently attain their goals. This model of legal-rational bureaucracy described by Weber is defined by three rules of conduct. The first is that the powers and duties of officials are defined in terms of impersonal criteria. Secondly, officials are given only the authority necessary to carry out their responsibilities, and lastly, the means of force at their disposal are strictly limited as well as the conditions under which their services are legitimate are clearly defined. Moreover, according to Weber, every official and every office is part of the hierarchy of authority. Higher officials or offices perform supervision, and the lower officers and officials have the right to appeal. Lower officials do, however, have to follow the duties and instructions requested by higher officials. Weber's argument speaks to how in the findings of this study it was discovered that the decision-making behaviour of junior managers at the municipality is most often influenced by senior officials or heads of departments, to act and make decisions that are based on the influence of hose in higher rankings in the municipality or local government as a whole. In cases of resistance, then circumstances may result in negative attitudes and actions.

This adds to the notion of political influence and factions within the municipality that support specific candidates, whether or not they meet the minimum qualification requirements, noting that formal rules were not a priority factor in determining those that might be competent. Along these lines, Larbi, (2003) has argued that 'productivity, efficiency, effectiveness and competitiveness are not immediate priorities of the public servants in South Africa. "The public sector underperforms [in South Africa] because state officials pursue their narrow self-interest rather than the public interest." In the findings, the researcher discovered that rule deviation was seen as a response to organisational norms which might lead to negative organisational outcomes by some of the participants, however, this view was not shared by all participants. A number of the participants stated that rule deviation does offer some form of assistance with dealing with situational environments where formal rules do not offer support or sustainability.

The findings also revealed that rule deviation, which is often referred to as a form of noncompliance or breaking the rules, is not only motivated by public servants' self-interests, but also because of acts that might be beneficial to the organisation in one form or another. The study focused on this implication in light of bureaucratic structures and individual characteristics. Helmke and Levitsky (2004) also argue that for one to achieve a good institutional analysis, both formal and informal institutions need to be regarded, as informal institutions do shape the improvement and performance of formal institutions, and at times assist in improving efficiency in bureaucratic structures.

Lastly, the research study revealed that the very legitimate fears of the rule of law, or political norms, being weak, subverted, or co-opted for private gain, even when institutions are working just as they are designed, they may run the risk of incentivizing calculation over compassion and understanding of the needs of the people. Because institutions and their effects, can be callous and removed from human consequences, public servants at the municipality sometimes opt for pro-social rule-breaking as a solution to addressing the intricacies of situational environments. This is because institutions sometimes lack to bridge the gap between the pursuit of efficient, effective bureaucratic action on the one hand, and putting the people's needs first, on the other.

A municipal department like such as Emergency Management Services (EMS) that deals with communities and people's lives daily, often applies pro-social rule-breaking behaviour to certain situations. The emergency management service is a public function of the municipality that requires attention to the appropriateness of rules in specific circumstances and response to

varying complexities of its function. This is because rules, though they are mostly comprehensive, clear, and well-intentioned, in some cases do not address the complexity of every situation. Therefore, this invites public servants to not always complying with the standard rules of the municipality/ local government. Public servants then consider policy implementation in the context of dealing with communities and specific situations, in cases where rules and specific situations are at odds. Then, variation is often found in situations that may call for complying with rules of the department or municipality or not complying, in the quest to put the needs of the people first and an honour a duty to serve, as Weber (1946) states.

5.3 CONCLUSION

Although there is limited literature available on the rationale behind why public servants in local government comply with certain rules and not with others and how situational environments affect the decision-making behaviour of public servants, this research study provided us with the notion that public servants respond to rules usually through actions or perceptions of what they deem 'appropriate', as suggested in the LoA framework. According to Weber's ideal type, rules and their enforcement serve both to limit free-riding and to internalize organizational imperatives, whatever they might be. While at times, rules can proliferate to an organization's detriment, public servants can determine which rules are important and thereby cut through the red tape if they are so motivated.

However, as the research study has shown some factors are more complexed than Weber's explanation suggests. Public servants' perception of the appropriateness of decision-making behaviour in situational settings is affected by the nature of the rules themselves or the contents of the rules. There are several works of literature on behavioural-oriented identities, however, the LoA framework provides a better analysis of how identities impact the decision-making behaviour of public servants. This study demonstrated that public servants define situations in accordance with the LoA framework, though the study also discovered that a situation could call forth different rules or accounts, where more than one potentially appropriate rule is evoked. Public servants at times then find rules and situations to be obscure, therefore, defining what is appropriate and true as ambiguous. This is caused by identities and rules colliding and making prescription less obvious to the particular situation.

CHAPTER SIX

THE CONCLUSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides concluding remarks of the research study. The study sought to examine the identity of public servants in local government and the impact of their identity on decision-making behaviour. The study also provided an explanation behind the actions and behavioural norms of public servants at the City of Joburg municipality. The conclusion herein emanates from the findings of this study and the appropriate literature.

6.2 PURPOSE STATEMENT

The objective of this study was to investigate how the ideas of identity influence the decision-making of public servants in local government, as well as understanding why certain rules adhere to more than others when situational environments arise. A case study on public servants in the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality was conducted. This was done by means of interviews and participant observations of twelve participants who hold managerial positions within the municipality. The study undertook to respond to the primary research question on how identity impacts the decision-making behaviour of public servants in situational environments supported by the secondary research question of what motivates the decision-making behaviour of local government public servants in a set of circumstances.

6.3 THEORETICAL SETTING / LITERATURE REVIEW

The study was premised on the theory of identity with a specific focus on decision-making behaviour. Public administration literature has previously considered a variety of explanations for public servant behaviours, including various inherent and extrinsic motivations that range from lack of skills to the venal and corrupt behaviours of public servants. According to the symbolic interactionist theory, identity is the formation of the self-concept that involves role making as a construction of a role related identity. Identity offers a link between an individual and micro-structures (Turner, 2001), and relates to the individual's understanding of personal consequences of any behaviour (Owen and Serpe, 2003). In dilemma situations, there is no surety on how individuals may act (Schott, Seen and van Kleef, 2014), or how their notion of identity may determine their decision-making (Torpman, 2004).

Burke and Reitzes (1981) suggested that the common link between identities and behaviour happens through their mutual frameworks. The basis that one uses to evaluate their identity in a set of circumstances is the same basis used to evaluate their behaviour or action in those same circumstances. A person acts this way because they have this identity (Burke and Reitzes, 1981). After all, differences in identity occur from 'situational details' (Messik 1999, 4). Meyer et al (2014) argued that new managerial ideas and novel identity elements of public servants are added to public administration, whereas the core identity and frames of references remain anchored in the traditional bureaucratic logic of the Weberian concept. This is how we can understand the behaviour of public servants in the new era.

Under the 1996 constitution of the Republic of South Africa, public servants in local government are entrusted with making decisions that are aligned to the administration of municipalities. From the municipal manager to heads of department, their decision-making processes are firstly guided by the regulations and legal frameworks of local government to co-ordinate and implement all programmes approved by the council. However, the challenges remain significant. Many communities see municipalities as a place of dysfunction, corruption, and inaccessibility. According to the Auditor-General of South Africa's report (2019), the failures in areas such as financial and performance management occurred despite there being laws and regulations in place to guide those entrusted with decision-making powers within local government.

Lipsky (2010) argued that bureaucrats join public service as individuals with different and unique life experiences and personalities. The actions of bureaucrats are consistently reproduced by the behaviour of individuals. "Bureaucratic decision making takes place under conditions of limited time and information" (Lipsky 2010, 235), therefore, bureaucrats who are decision-makers are typically constrained by the costs of obtaining information that will assist in making better judgments. Lipsky's work, just like most of the authors in this chapter who outline and address different views around identity and decision-making in organisational or administrative settings, has based their arguments on the theory around these concepts. While I agree with some of the work and explanations provided that identity is valuable in learning more about what drives public servants' decision-making and actions, by measuring decision making in dilemma situations.

6.4 RESEARCH METHOD

The study employed a qualitative research method which was undertaken through interviews, to achieve an interpretative approach to the research paper. The interviews were conducted on public servants who are employed at the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality. A total of twelve public servants participated in the study. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner and unstructured natural flowing conversations so that the participants were able to narrate freely.

6.5 FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The study focused on this implication in light of bureaucratic structures and individual characteristics. As the study has shown some factors are more complexed than Weber's explanation that bureaucrats are goal-oriented individuals designed rationally to efficiently attain their goals. The findings revealed that the public servants' perception of the appropriateness of decision-making in situational settings is affected by the nature of the rules themselves or the contents of the rules. The study demonstrated that public servants define situations in accordance with the LoA framework, though it also discovered that a situation could call forth different rules or accounts, where more than one potentially appropriate rule is evoked.

The findings also revealed that rule deviation, which is often referred to as a form of noncompliance or breaking the rules, is not only motivated by public servants' self-interests, but also because of acts that might be beneficial to the organisation in one form or another. Public servants act on the basis of the rules that are appropriate to their current situation, by matching rules to the situation. For instance, assisting a service provider in a situation whereby one will have to deviate from the organization's set of rules because they view the decision taken in that situation as beneficial to the organisation in its own way.

The findings presented in the study also provided a background into the motivation behind the actions and behavioural norms of public servants at the City of Joburg municipality. The public servants provided a descriptive narrative on how they understood the notion of identity and the influence it has on their decision-making behaviour as a manager in local government, by arguing that political influence and pro-social rule breaking as dominant explanations for their actions and decision-making when in certain situations.

6.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is limited to the City of Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality and as such, the finding of the study may not be illustrative of public servants' behaviour in other municipalities in the country. The study was limited to the available public servants that hold managerial positions and decision-making power within the municipality.

As part of the research study, the researcher had included job shadowing in the methodology of the study. This was to provide support to the ethnographic observations and the exploration processes in general. However, due to the current global Coronavirus pandemic, the methodology of this study had slight limitations as some participants were working from home due to lockdown regulations that the municipality had put in place. This had caused a constraint with regards to conduct ethnographic observations of the participants in their work setting, as some participants were not available for one to conduct observations of their day-to-day operations in the workplace.

6.7 SUGGESTIONS FOR POSSIBLE RESEARCH

Besides the theoretical concepts written around the topic, there seems to be a lack of case studies conducted and there is very little prior research on this specific topic. This enables and identifies new gaps in the literature and presents the need for further development in this area of study. The study is crucial for understanding organizational behaviour in relation to institutions and decision-making, especially since the effectiveness of institutions is said to be a contributing factor to the effectiveness of the organisation.

Therefore, further research in the following areas is suggested:

1) Comparative perspectives of metropolitan municipalities and local municipalities on what motivates decision-making behaviour of public servants.

2) The effect of social structures when it comes to bureaucratic practices and decision-making process in local government.

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