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FACTORS THAT CITIZENS CONSIDER AS OBSTACLES FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC MEETINGS: A CASE STUDY IN THE CITY OF JOHANNESBURG

By

MOLLY MASHUDU NETSHIMBOLIMBO

A research report submitted to the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management at the University of Witwatersrand in fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Management (by Dissertation)

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ABSTRACT

Modes of democratic participation to enhance the democracy in South Africa since 1994 remain a critical issue to be considered and prioritised across all spheres of government, especially in the current era where there is technology and methods of communication with citizens are at an advanced stage. However, regardless of this technological advancement, the government had been observed utilising the “traditional” methods of engaging with citizens, despite these methods not bringing active participatory platforms. Public meetings have been one of the participatory mechanisms utilised by the City of Johannesburg to engage with citizens.

The primary purpose of this research, therefore, was to explore the factors that citizens consider as obstacles for public participation in public meetings. A qualitative study, following a case study design in the City of Johannesburg, was conducted and data were collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis.

The study revealed that the public participation in public meetings within the City of Johannesburg (COJ) is affected by governance, management and accountability towards public meetings. However, citizens have suggested areas of improvement for the COJ towards public participation and should the city focus on those suggestions, there could be improvement in public participation in the future. The study also revealed that public meetings are no longer the most relevant public participation method to engage with the citizens, especially in the current era where citizens have busy schedules and find it hard to avail themselves for public meetings. The study revealed that there are other avenues that can be used for interacting with the public and in this regard, social media was recommended as a mechanism for active participation of citizens. Recommendations informed by participants’ views and management theories were also made.

Key Words: Public meetings, Citizen perceptions, Public participation, Governance, Democracy, Accountability.

DECLARATION

I, MOLLY MASHUDU NETSHIMBOLIMBO, declare that this research report is my own, unaided work. It is submitted in fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Masters by Dissertation to the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university or educational institution.

_____

Name

_____

Date (Day, Month, Year)

DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to the Almighty God for giving me strength and inspiration to achieve this; my family for the support, patience and understanding during my studies and for the many days I spent away from them. With love and thanks.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research report was made possible by those who selflessly devoted their time regardless of their busy schedules, to ensure that the views and concerns of the citizens are heard, by doing so, empowering the communities at large to raise their voices on issues that concern them.

I humbly express my gratitude to the following people who made my research project came to pass by means of encouragement, support and availability to ensure that the research was completed on time.

Professor Susan Booysen, thank you for being the greatest teacher, for the guidance and supervision you provided throughout this research process. Your patience, assistance, advice and support during this time were invaluable.

I would also like to acknowledge the financial support received from the City of Johannesburg, which made my studies possible.

The respondents who participated in the research project: City of Johannesburg councillors; colleagues in the City of Johannesburg; community members living within the focus areas of this research; and all those who participated during research interviews. Thank you very much for the support and effort spent in helping me achieve the intended goal of completing this research project. I trust that the project and its findings will contribute to nurturing an active citizenry, with the best possible opportunities to participate, and advanced municipal governance.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BRT	Bus Rapid Transit
CAPEX	Capital expenditure
CBOs	Community-based Organisations
CBP	Community-based Planning
COJ	City of Johannesburg
DPLG	Department of Provincial and Local Government
FBO	Faith-based Organisations
GDS	Growth and Development Strategy
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
MOE	Municipal Owned Entity
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
PR	Proportional Representation
PSC	Public Service Commission
RD	Regional Director
SANCO	South African National Congress
USA	United States of America

1 CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

Public meetings have been acknowledged as a platform for civic participation internationally, particularly in the United States of America (USA) where they are considered to have a long and effective history (Leighter, 2009; McComas, 2003:164; Adams, 2004:43). However public meetings were seen differently by Adams (2004, p.50) who viewed them as not the only way to influence governmental agendas but as platforms to engage with the citizens. Most local governments hold regularly scheduled meetings to discuss and decide on public issues; inform the public and stakeholders about the local projects or planning ventures (Boholm, 2008, p.11; Adams, 2004, p.50). This is the case even in the City of Johannesburg (COJ) context as outlined in the COJ Integrated Development Plan (IDP) (2015), wherein public participation has been seen as a tool for the government to engage with citizens. When there are programmes on which the government needs to embark, one of the mechanisms utilised is through a visit to a particular targeted community to inform them about the proposed programme.

It is also important that whilst the government strives to ensure that there is public participation on the roll-out of programmes, the public must be involved, consulted and engaged. This will allow citizens to express their views and opinions on the issues within the local government that have direct impact on their daily lives and also to have their voices heard. This process of consultation is done through public meetings initiated by local government where the citizens are expected to participate. This expectation from the local government`s side was confirmed by Reddy (1996, p.3) who affirmed that globally, the local government is expected to bring government to the grassroots level and ensure that citizens are offered an opportunity to get involved and participate in the political processes that have an impact on their daily lives.

The benefits of public participation go a long way for both the citizens and the local government. Public participation is therefore effective when there is a reciprocal relationship between the two, which denotes that nothing can be done by the government without the involvement of the citizens (McComas, 2003, p.165). According to Ledingham (2001), citizens' perception that local government provides benefits for local people, and that government has the best interest in local people where in there is dedication of resources towards citizens; important matters tend to maximise participation in local government affairs. This also strengthens the relationship between people and local government.

For the benefit of the current study which was conducted in the COJ in Gauteng Province, the research focused on the period between 2011 and 2016.This period covers the term in which the COJ has put in place the Growth and Development Strategy (GDS) 2040 outreach strategy (2011) to ensure meaningful public participation. The study thus seeks to establish if there is a relationship between citizen response to the COJ approach of leadership, whether it is the top-down or bottom-up approach, and their response towards public participation. There is a gap between the COJ`s 2040 GDS (2011) implementation plan versus the actual roll-out of the strategy as there is no effective participation on the part of the citizens to ensure the successful roll-out of the strategy. Hence it was imperative for the current study to determine the obstacles that hinder effective participation from the citizens within the COJ. The study thus explores the views of the citizens within the COJ in the form of selection of face-to-face interviews with the citizens themselves to understand factors underlying their perceptions of public meetings as well as those who are responsible for ensuring there are participatory platforms in the city.

Black (1976) explained the objectives of a research project as a process wherein details of what the researcher wishes to accomplish through his/her investigative activity are outlined and given.The study`s contribution to the field was obtained through exploring case studies of citizen participation in the COJ and testing prevailing theory about public participation in local government governance processes. It is envisaged that, in its practical application, the findings will help ensure that citizens of the COJ themselves are afforded improved opportunities and platforms to engage on COJ programmes with COJ departments and its entities. At the same time, the motives and preferences of this study are influenced by the need to test, explore and build theories around public participation. The objective of this study was also to identify problems and where there are gaps, identify what factors hinder the participation of citizens in public meetings.

The current study investigated the assertion by Franklin and Ebdon (2002) who observed that there were more formal opportunities for citizen input in larger cities compared to the smaller cities and ascertained if this is the case within the COJ as one of the biggest municipalities in Gauteng. The reason for this practice was elaborated further by Franklin and Ebdon (2002) as being through the opportunities available for smaller cities to interact with citizens during informal activities such as social club meetings or school activities and hence he believed that participation is maximised in the smaller cities. The study also aims to ascertain if the citizens are aware of the benefits of public participation and whether they recognised the obstacles that hinder effective participation. The study explored the extent to which governance processes in the COJ contributed to the factors that citizens had considered as obstacles for the public to participate in public meetings. It was also imperative for this study to investigate

if the three identified themes of governance, accountability and management processes can be related to the citizens' views on the obstacles that they consider as hindering public participation in public meetings. The literature offered provisional insights into local government governance processes, accountability and management of public participation processes. The study also dealt with the way citizens respond to the public participation process. These aspects were investigated through the exploration of the perceptions of the citizens within the COJ in Gauteng towards public meetings. The study established whether the discrepancies in the public participation systems in terms of structures and processes had an impact on the effectiveness of public participation. The project then engaged with select groups of citizens on the factors that they consider as obstacles hindering participation in public meetings, as one significant component of general participatory processes.

The COJ, as a case study of deterrents to public participation, based its strategic planning framework on three definitive documents, namely, the Joburg 2040 strategy; the five-year Integrated Development Plan (IDP) strategy, and business plans for departments and municipal owned entities. The COJ strategies on public participation, inclusive of public meetings lies on these three documents. On a five-year period, these frameworks are reviewed by the COJ. For the purpose of this study, public participation in the 2011-2015 time frames was the focus.

Recommendations to undertake studies of this nature have been made by McComas, Besley and Trumbo (2006) who confirmed that there is a need for in-depth research to explore public meetings as an essential part of processes of public participation. They proposed specifically a study which would focus on in-depth interviews or focus groups about public meetings. They asserted that it would be ideal to explore the perceptions of citizens towards public meetings. The COJ in its IDP reviewed document (2015) equally identified the need for a study to explore the perceptions of the city`s citizens towards public participation. Besley, McComas and Trumbo (2012), in their study on citizens' views about public meetings, went further and showed that there is a need for additional research which must identify the full range of variables when finding out the views of citizens about public meetings. Besley *et al. (*2012) confirmed that very little social research prevails which focuses specifically on the views of citizens on public meetings. McComas *et al.* (2006) further stated that if one understands why people do or do not attend public meetings, appropriate interventions to ensure representativeness can be identified.

For the study of Johannesburg, it is therefore imperative that the citizens within the COJ are engaged. This will ensure that there is good governance within the local government through the local government leadership. The COJ strives to implement their mandate by ensuring that

there are effective public participation programmes to engage with the citizens. Facilitating public meetings is one of the vehicles utilised in the local government to maximise public participation, hence the current study focused on understanding the perceptions of the citizens on the subject matter. Citizen participation had been seen by Callahan (2007, p.145) as controversial in generating debate within the deliberative process of government. Callahan (2007, p.145) asserts that as a way to build trust, increase transparency and better enable the public to hold government accountable for results, the government should create meaningful opportunities for people to be involved in. The COJ might also learn from the current research and use it to benefit its citizens.

1.2 The importance of public meetings

Different authors gave their definitions of what public meetings are and the research briefly defines each of them with the view to selecting the suitable definition which is relevant to the current study. Hughes (2006, p.71) acknowledges that government can lobby participation through convening gatherings with government representatives, telephone calls and writing letters. The organisation of petitions or demonstration by citizens aiming to obtain support from members of parliament or other legislative institutions on a certain opinion or policy position was therefore advised. Citizens are also welcomed to express themselves through letters to the press, make press statements and the use of social media. Different strategies of public participation were identified, however public meetings stand central amongst them (Hughes, 2006, p.71).

McComas *et al. (*2010) defined public meetings as a process where the public gather socially, consisting of three or more people with the aim to obtain information and public input into decisions or recommendations. Pittle (1982) realised that citizens are offered an opportunity to see the government in action on the matters that affect them through the public meetings. Cogan (1992) refers to public meetings as an engagement by elected and/or appointed officials where there is participation by the public. Conroy and Gordon (2004, p.20) put emphasis on the participatory approach which placed public meetings on the provision of primary feedback mechanism.

Besley, McComas and Trumbo (2012) advised of the possibility of direct linkage between public officials and participants who attend the meeting when public meetings are facilitated well. Ergenc (2014) refers to the concept of a public hearing as the availability of officials to hear citizens' views on a policy matter or legislation through a public meeting. Boholm (2008) reflects that government agencies, municipalities and companies had utilised public meetings as platforms to inform the public and stakeholders about projects. Public participation, as

defined by purpose, thus refers to forums for exchange of information, that are organised for the purpose of facilitating communication between government, citizens, stakeholders, interest groups and businesses regarding a specific decision or problem (Renn *et al.*, 1995). In the South African context, the Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG, 2007) defined public participation as a process where individuals and groups within selected communities can exchange views and influence decision-making through an open and accountable process. The current research project adopts this definition and refers to public meetings as events that are initiated and convened by the ward councillor.

1.3 Location of the study

The study was conducted in the COJ. As it can be seen from figure 1.1 the boundaries of demarcation within the COJ indicate the following areas: Alexandra, Diepkloof, Diepsloot, Ennerdale, Johannesburg, Johannesburg South, Lawley, Lenasia, Lenasia South, Meadowlands East, Meadowlands West, Midrand, Orange Farm, Pimville, Randburg, Roodepoort, Sandton and Soweto. This was highlighted in the COJ`s 2040 Growth and Development Strategy (2011). For the purpose of this research, the researcher needed to do an in-depth study, where a decision to focus on a smaller geographical area was therefore considered. As a result, this research did not focus on the entire City of Johannesburg. As per figure 1.1 this study focused on the participants for both focus groups and semi-structured interviews who were from different geographical areas within the COJ, in particular Region E and F.

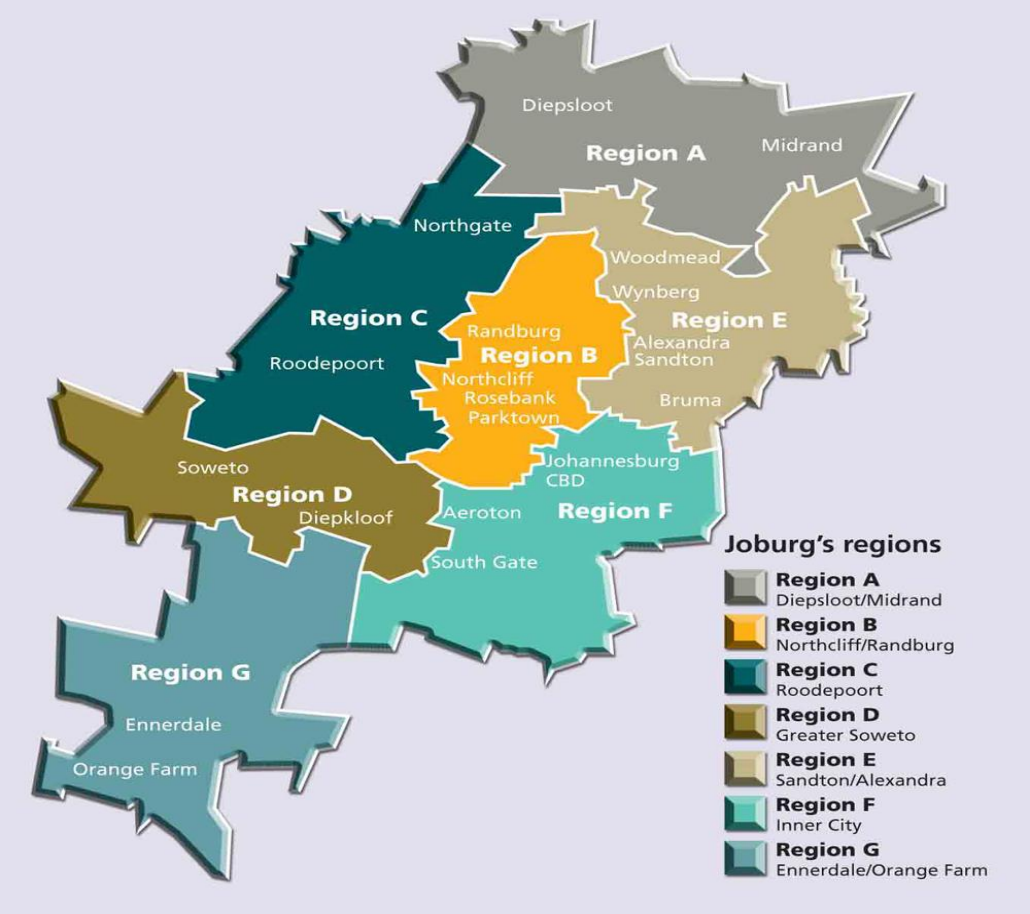


***Figure 1.1: Map of the COJ.* Source: www.joburg.org.za**

1.4 Rationale behind studying public participation in public meetings

Callahan (2007, p.157) asserts on the extensive documentation in the public administration literature, of the reasons for including the public in the decision-making procedures which are many. The author put emphasis on the reason why citizens are included in decision making which is to find out what the public wants and also to ascertain their priorities and preferences. He further assured that these procedures of citizen's involvement in public participation ensure that these values play a part in the public decision-making process. The author further emphasised that citizens will gain trust in the government when they are included in decision making processes. This transparent process also assists in the reduction of conflicts with citizens. It was also emphasised by Callahan (2007, p.157) that when citizens are included in the decision making process there is hope that better outcomes will be achieved. Through the inclusion of every citizen in the local government environment, the citizens' quality decisions are incorporated to form part of local knowledge.

Another rationale for public participation was identified by Callahan (2007, p.157) as being for the promotion of openness and accountability, as well as advancing fairness and justice. Ultimately, there could be social capital; mutual understanding; bonds of trust among the public, decision makers and governing institutions cultivated and built through citizen participation. The author further criticised the reasons cited by many agencies that citizen participation is time consuming and too expensive as this will minimise citizen participation in decision making (Callahan, 2007, p.157). Citizens should have a direct voice in public decisions through this process. The author further acknowledged the rejection and by-passing of the policies by citizens due to the lack of consultative processes with the citizens. When citizens are not involved in the formulation of these policies, they reject them (Callahan, 2007, p.157).

For the benefit of this study, a benchmark was done through the public participation framework, facilitated through the Legislative Sector Public Participation Document (2013, p.24). This framework outlined the approach, which sets the tone for best practices in public participation, as well as how public participation should be reflected within the local government environment, and they advised that it should be modelled as follows:

- **Public Participation:** It includes innovative modes of public education and media campaigns; public consultation (both on how the process should be undertaken and on the substance of the legislation); national dialogue and other creative means. Ideally the public participation process should be balanced between the interests of competing groups and communities.
- **Representation and Inclusion:** All the relevant and key stakeholders should be included in the benefits of public participation process. This process should be geared to reach out to the marginalised sectors of society, including women, young people, people with disabilities, ethnic/religious minorities and indigenous groups, older people, poorer socio-economic and disadvantaged groups, and migrants and non-citizens formally resident in the country.
- **Transparency:** A transparent process would enable the public, media and civil society to participate by keeping them informed about how the process will be conducted, the modes of appointment and election of their representatives, the adoption process, their role in the process, and by providing feedback about the results of public consultations. This process is in contradiction with the closed elite dominated processes of the past. When there is transparency media accessibility should be considered at appropriate times.

- **National ownership:** The principle of “national ownership” requires that civil society and the broader public be provided with opportunities to “own” both the process and the outcomes. Ideally, during the early phases of negotiation on establishing the framework and structure upon which the process is to be operated, there should be stakeholder engagement at every stage of the process. Space, time, and resources to develop the capacity of inexperienced actors to participate, consult, manage and implement the process effectively must be provided if the process is to engender a sense of national ownership.

The benchmark for best practices on public participation by the Legislative Sector Public Participation Document (2013, p.24) relates to the model by Franklin and Ebdon (2002) in which they had advised its purpose was to effectively pursue public participation and is modelled as follows (Table 1.1):

Table 1.1: Supportive conditions leading to desired participation outcomes

Factor Group/ Variable Name	**Description of Supportive Condition**
City Structure Size Form of Government Legal Requirements	Larger cities are more likely to structure participation opportunities City manager will emphasise and council will support participation Structured to foster the incorporation of citizen input
Participants Invitation Selection Reasons	Council or manager encourage participation as valuable interaction Purposive criteria to foster opportunity as well as representation Citizens doing civic duty, not because of isolated dissatisfaction
Mechanisms Opportunities Timing Coverage	Multiple, interactive and institutionalised (good management, not crisis) Early in process and more than one-shot, but not large commitment City wide concerns rather than single issue or geographic focus
Process	Explicitly stated and ensures sufficient education

Purpose Format Preferences	Presents materials in laymen`s terms (tables, graphs, comparisons) Participants reveal preferences (sincere or relative weights)
Desired Outcomes	Decision makers use information for stated purpose Two-way communication and feedback on utilisation Participants are satisfied and perceive impact

Source: Franklin and Ebdon (2002)

Despite the tone and the model sets by the Legislative Sector Public Participation Document (2013) and Franklin and Ebdon (2002), this study explored the possibility that local government, in particular the City of Johannesburg, has not been successful in building effective public participation in public meetings. The question arises as to the exact reasons for this failure. Hence the results of this study would be relevant to get a new and detailed understanding of the citizens' perceptions with regard to the factors they consider as obstacles for public participation in public meetings. The best practice model of public participation clearly outlined the model and preferences for local government to benchmark against when conducting public participation. However, regardless of this model, the COJ seems to have not maximised the participation of citizens in public meetings. The plan appears attractive on paper but difficult to do in practice. Those who are responsible for the administrative role in convening public meetings should benchmark around best practices when they plan to engage citizens in future, hence the results of this study will assist the COJ to focus on areas of improvement to ensure the efficient participation of citizens in public meetings.

1.5 Background

Both theoretically, and in application, this study located public meetings under the umbrella of public participation. Public meetings are classified as such from both theoretical and application perspectives. However, despite their centrality to public participation, public meetings have been observed as difficult to implement effectively. Hulbert and Gupta (2015) criticised how the literature has spoken highly of public participation, yet had done this without examining that participation can be a challenge when implemented through inappropriate mechanisms. The literature has been more balanced in this impression as there is an extensive amount of work done on the different mechanisms of public participation. The

question to be raised is why there is reluctance and resistance to meaningfully participate in public meetings? The phenomenon, as identified by Hulbert and Gupta (2015), relates to what Franklin and Ebdon (2002) acknowledged when they argued that citizen participation is not an easy task to undertake. It looks good on paper but is difficult to do in practice (Ebdon & Franklin, 2002).

This study has located public participation within the contextual setting of policy and legislation in the ambit of Chapter 4 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act No.108 of 1996. Parliament is intended to be the overseer of how government implements the laws and programmes it promised to deliver; and to ensure public involvement in the process. Such participatory roles are duplicated at the local level in municipalities such as the COJ.

At the local level, the importance of citizen participation was elaborated by the Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG, 2007) who noted that municipalities required active participation by citizens at four levels. These levels are recorded in the White Paper on Local Government of 1998:

- As voters: to empower elected political leadership in ensuring maximum democratic accountability for the promotion of policies;
- As citizens: who express their views before, during and after the policy development process in order to ensure that policies reflect community preferences as far as possible through the different stakeholder associations;
- As consumers and end-users: who expect value-for-money, affordable services and courteous and responsive service; and
- As organised partners: through the private sector, non-governmental organisations and community-based organisations, citizens are involved in the mobilisation of resources for development.

This set of citizen roles indicates the value that citizens can derive from embracing the successful implementation of public participation. In this context, the study ascertained whether the citizens were aware of the benefits of public participation and whether they recognised the obstacles that hinder effective participation.

Arnstein`s (1969) research indicates that public administrators rarely relinquish enough control to allow citizens to share in the decision-making process, let alone reach the top of the ladder(Figure 1.2). The current study had utilised Arnstein`s research to elaborate on the expected levels of citizen participation within the local government. The following table (Table 1.2) represents the level of citizens' participation in local government as described by Sherry Arnstein (1969).

Table 1.2: Level of citizen participation in local government

Levels	Types	Characteristics
Citizen-power	Citizen control	This range is the highest level. Citizens have the degree of power (or control) which guarantees the participation in governing a program from citizens.
	Delegated power	Citizen participation is performed through negotiations between citizens and authorities, resulting in positive role the citizens' play in partial decision making with the authority over a particular plan or project.
	Partnership	Power is in fact redistributed through negotiation between citizens and power-holders.
Tokenism	Placation	*Placation* is a stage that citizens begin to have some degree of influence though tokenism is still apparent.
	Consultation	People are invited to give their suggestions; this rung of the ladder is still a sham since no assurance is offered. Concerns and ideas of citizens will not be taken into consideration.
	Informing	Authorities inform citizens of their rights; However, more emphasis is put on a one-way flow of information.
Nonparticipation	Therapy	With respect to group therapy, masked as citizen participation, should be on the lowest rung of the ladder because it is both dishonest and arrogant.
	Manipulation	Based on so-called citizen participation, people are placed on rubber stamp advisory committees.

Source: Arnstein, 1969

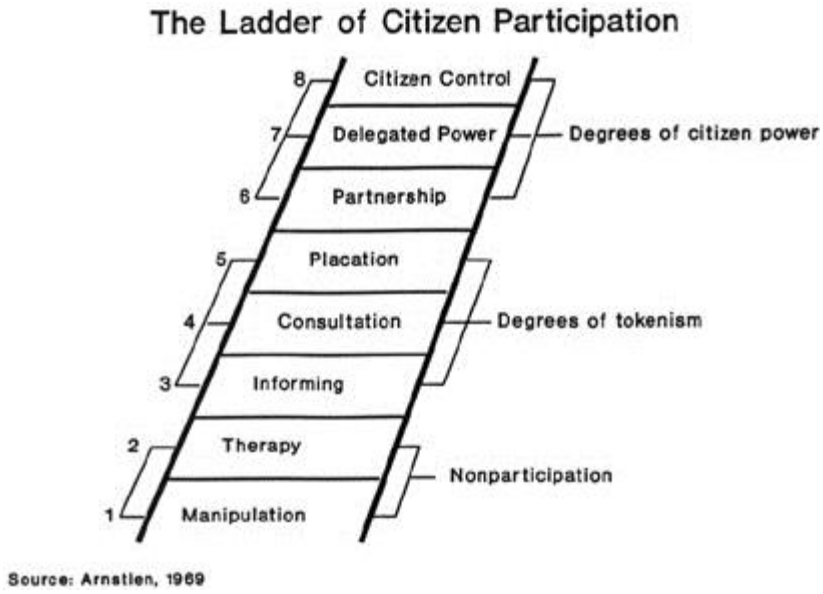


Figure 1.2: The Ladder of Citizen Participation

Callahan (2007, p.175) explained this ladder when he indicated that the ladder ranges from an active role for citizens in decision-making, at the top rung of the ladder, to a passive role or no role at all at the bottom rung. At the bottom of the ladder, citizens are either manipulated into thinking that they have real influence in the decision making process by serving on an advisory committee that has no power, or they are led to believe their behaviour is the source of the problem. A consultative role is assumed by citizens in the middle of the ladder. This process is inclusive of the decisions offered to citizens when they are made already, where public managers invite citizens to attend meetings and complete surveys that are carefully crafted by public managers. At the top of the ladder, citizens enter into partnership with the public managers where decision making authority is delegated to citizens, ultimately resulting in full citizen governance (Callahan, 2007). Abelson, Forest, Eyles, Smith, Martin and Gauvin (2003) identified the need for new approaches that will enhance two-way interactions between the decision makers and the public. These authors also emphasised that the public participation processes utilised in the past may no longer be relevant for the current decision-making processes, since, in the current era, people have achieved higher education and have become more sophisticated.

Abelson *et al.* (2003) also emphasised that in the past, much attention had been given to normative discussions of the merits of, and conceptual frameworks for, public involvement, whereas currently, activities largely focus on efforts to design more informed, effective and legitimate public participation processes with a strong evaluation component. Those who are responsible for ensuring public participation effectiveness should assess the appropriate processes that suit the modern world so the citizens can relate to them for improved

participation and outcomes (Abelson *et al.,* 2003). Modes of democratic participation to enhance the democracy in South Africa since 1994 were noted by Adams (2004) and the Presidency of South Africa (2010), as an issue to be considered, even in the current era where there is technological advancement and methods of communication with citizens are at an advanced stage. According to the COJ's 2040 Growth and Development Strategy (GDS) document (2011), the manner in which the metropolitan government addresses its mandate and functions is driven through the identification of its stakeholders' needs, and the subsequent implementation and execution of strategies designed to continuously improve the quality of life for all. To assist the city in understanding these needs to a greater degree, the city implemented a feedback and engagement process, called the 'GDS outreach' (COJ 2040, GDS) published in May 2011. The then Executive Mayor of the COJ, Parks Tau, launched the outreach programme in August 2011, with the intention of producing a local government strategy that would focus on understanding the experiences of Gauteng people as well as addressing their opinions and needs. The GDS outreach also aims to ensure a holistic approach to public participation with regard to a developmental local government strategy for all (COJ 2040, GDS).

1.6 Research problem statement

This section concentrates on delineating the problem that the research intends to investigate. The researcher based her source of the research problem on the previous studies on public participation focusing on public meetings. That formed the basis of the theoretical gaps on public participation, hence the intention to pursue these gaps in the current study. Although much research has been conducted on public participation globally, McComas (2003) asserts that little is known on the perceptions and views of the citizens about the public participation processes, inclusive of public meetings. This has also been the case with particular reference to the South African context, and in the COJ. McComas (2003, p.165) advised that whilst understanding the views of participants is important, it is perhaps just as important to understand the views of citizens who have opportunities to attend public meetings but choose not to, in efforts to determine what encourages or discourages participation. The COJ is faced with a challenge of lack of participation in public meetings for developmental programmes and this study explores the obstacles encountered by citizens in their quest to participate meaningfully in this case study of the COJ. No known research has been conducted in or on the COJ concerning the perceptions and views of citizens regarding public meetings. This scholarly knowledge gap was also reflected in the COJ`s IDP strategy reviewed in 2015. It identified a need exactly for a study that would explore the perceptions of the citizens towards public participation. This was as a result of the quality of life and satisfaction with service

delivery survey conducted across the COJ in June 2015 (COJ IDP strategy, 2015/16). In that study, it was indicated that there were low levels of participation shown by the city`s residents in terms of democratic participation where citizens were demonstrated to be poorly participating into local government activities. A better understanding was therefore required to illuminate why citizens showed low levels of participation in various forums available, inclusive of public meetings. This also allowed citizens the opportunity to have their input which would aid in shaping development within their jurisdictions.

The challenge faced by the government had been the response of citizens when they are invited for participation into the programmes that are beneficial to them and yet they do not show up. Having developed all the messages and slogans around public participation, it seems the local government has not been on the winning side with the citizens in understanding their views on the factors that they consider as obstacles for participating in public meetings.

The current research project set out to obtain evidence on the perceptions of the citizens within the COJ about public meetings. Preliminary observations indicated that, despite efforts by the local government to ensure good governance that engages citizens thoroughly and that elicits maximum buy-in from the citizens, there are challenges with ensuring efficient public participation. The response of the citizens with regard to public participation processes has thus motivated this study which has the core empirical objective of ascertaining what perceptions citizens have with regard to public meetings that constitute an integral part of the public participation process.

The research therefore aims to close the knowledge gap concerning the little that is known from research regarding citizens' views and perceptions about public meetings with specific reference to the South African context and the COJ in particular. McComas *et al.* (2006) and McComas *et al. (*2010) confirmed that little has been researched with regard to the rituals of public meetings. The current research project thus aims to build understanding on the views of the citizens of the COJ regarding participation in public meetings staged by the city, and hereby help extend prevailing theoretical insights.

This study also seeks to determine whether public participation in the COJ follows a top-down approach wherein the policy makers draft and implement policies without acknowledging the citizens, or a bottom-up approach wherein decisions taken are informed by the consultation done with the citizens first. The top-down approach was criticised by Renn *et al*. (1995) for its failure to consider sufficiently the broader affected interests and tends to focus narrowly on

scientific objectivity due to the lack of popular consultation. The top-down approach had been observed for neglecting to heed the knowledge of local people who are most familiar with the problem and this resulted in incompetent and unworkable outcomes (Renn, *et al*., 1995). However, Webler and Tuler (2000) were of the opinion that by designing participatory processes aimed at rendering effective policy outputs and meeting democratic expectations, these criticisms can be adequately addressed. Irvin and Stansbury (2004) emphasised that complacent communities argue strongly for top-down administration simply on the grounds of efficiency. Citizens are robbed of their democratic rights to exercise their roles and responsibilities to ensure meaningful participation in local government affairs through the top-down approach. Citizens may refuse to abide by the laws and policies enforced on them since there had been insufficient consultation with them and they do not feel they were included in the participation process. Conroy and Gordon (2004, p.20) assert that simple one-way forms of communication obtained through public meetings, merely provide citizens with information in order to educate them to accept a decision that has already been made.

The COJ, through the GDS 2040 outreach programme, put plans in place to effectively manage public participation processes within the city. The plans appear attractive on paper, though difficult to achieve in reality, as participation still appears to be a challenge at grassroots level. This study investigated where the gap for meaningful participation was likely to be and if the COJ administration is capable of providing efficient public participation processes in reality. The COJ also acknowledged in their GDS 2040 policy that there are tensions experienced across all spheres of government. This includes between now and the future, between what is possible and what is desirable, between ideas and practice and these tensions are better managed within the context of governance. Leighter (2009, p.4) advised that an investigation of the communication strategies chosen by meeting participants will be useful for public participation scholars and practitioners, because it can provide a nuanced understanding of the public meeting process, identify how problems occur in the meeting, and offer insights into how such problems might be addressed. He further indicated that the dearth of studies that looked closely at the communication processes involved in public meetings indicates a substantial challenge to the theoretical maturation of the field of public participation.

1.7. Purpose statement

The purpose of the study is therefore to identify the factors that hinder public participation in public meetings within the COJ with special reference to:

- Governance processes;
- Accountability processes; and

- Management of public meetings.

i. Governance

The fundamental principles of good governance, as reflected in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, include the rule of law, accountability, accessibility, transparency, predictability, inclusivity and a focus on equity, participation and responsiveness to people's needs (GDS, 2040). Themes associated with the governance concept are inclusive of community participation, engagement and consultation. The role of all key stakeholders is fundamental in ensuring accountability and to monitor delivery.

Governance has been defined by Agere (2000, p.2) as the process where government determines its capacity to formulate policies and have them effectively implemented. The current research sought to determine if the COJ had the capacity to develop policies and also to establish if there were hindrances and obstacles to implementing these policies effectively. The study found that the COJ had the GDS outreach strategy on public participation, however effective implementation of these policies has been identified as the main challenge facing the City of Johannesburg. Bevir (2009, p.92) however, asserts that good governance is concerned with the wish list of political or legal institutions which consists of desired rules, processes and behaviour. He further gave examples of the state's ability to raise the rate of participation as one of the outcomes of good governance and thereby determining the ability of policy makers to govern the society (Bevir, 2009, p.96).

ii. Accountability

Callahan (2007, p.109) defined accountability as the answerability to someone for expected performance. Administrative accountability is the concept that officials are to be held answerable for general notions of democracy and morality, as well as for specific legal mandates. Public sector accountability involves not only formal oversight but also scrutiny in terms of citizen confidence and trust. Accountability, as such, involves the exercise of lawful and sensible administrative discretion and efforts to enhance citizen confidence in administrative institutions (Callahan, 2007, p.111).

Blair (2000, p.27) asserts that if public servants are held accountable, democratic governance can be a success. He further states that the accountability of government employees is to the elected representatives and these representatives must be accountable to the public. The accountability role of government has been clarified by Davids, Theron and Maphunye (2005) when they confirmed that through enforcing the internal accountability measures, this role can

be achieved. This process is inclusive of reports and feedback which are due to the public on the success and failures of public programmes. This role will best be monitored and administered through institutions such as the Auditor General, Public Service Commission, the Public Protector and the Judiciary. It is the responsibility of the local community to hold local authority accountable for the performance of their responsibilities (Leach, 1992). The process of accountability involves both a downwards and upwards approach and encompasses a continued relationship with citizens. Continuous consultation with the public should be embarked upon and should not be a process that ends during the election process (Stewart, 1988).

Davids *et al*. (2005) recognised the IDP, widely used within local governance in South Africa, as a strategic framework for municipal governance as well as a yardstick for political accountability and continuity, a vehicle to facilitate communication and a platform on which to engage in public participation strategies. At the same time, Stewart (1995) emphasised the expected mandate of local authorities to exercise the public power of government which requires accountability. The author further mentioned the local government`s structural component in the form of Ward and Proportional Representative (PR) councillors who are tasked with the responsibility of ensuring accountability (Stewart, 1995). A local authority has to account for its actions to the citizens, amongst others, through public meetings. The councillors are offered organisational support in their roles by means of the local authorities providing settings, processes and information to maximise efficiency in their roles (Stewart, 1995).

iii. Management of public meetings

From the researcher`s observations whilst preparing for the current study, the ward councillor has been convening public meetings within the COJ with the allocated ward administrators who assist them in facilitating the public meetings to ensure that the citizens are mobilised and gathered for public meetings (personal observations). However, there are also meetings that are requested by the communities themselves, but these meetings cannot be convened without the consent and involvement of the ward councillor (personal observations). The local government officials can also request the ward councillor to convene special meetings to introduce special projects and programmes which will require the involvement of the ward councillor in convening the public meeting (personal observations). As a result, the ward councillor plays a key role in the mobilisation of citizens to participate in public meetings.

The study thus investigates whether there is alignment between the structures and the processes of public participation within the COJ and explores the perceptions of the citizens

with regard to public meetings and the factors influencing their perceptions. A study of this nature contributes to the academic body of knowledge concerning how modern government public policy-making processes should address the issues of public participation.

The literature review thus far has confirmed that involvement of citizens in public meetings remains a key challenge that faces local government. McComas *et al. (*2006) and McComas *et al. (*2010) argue that little has been researched with regard to the rituals or processes and procedures of public meetings. This is confirmed by Boholm (2008), who states that there is little research about public meetings on the form, content and development of face-to-face communication and social interaction. He also states that there is a paucity of research on the efforts to involve the public in democratic processes. Brian and Speer (2011), in their research, raises the point that they did not understand the reasons why some people were active whilst others were inactive with regard to community gatherings. In this regard, Dahlgren (2009) asserts that participation have been chronic throughout much of democracy`s modern history and that low levels of participation are nothing new.

A need for research to establish the exact reasons why some people participate in public dialogues whilst others are not keen to participate is identified by Turcanu and Perko (2014). From their research, it is evident that citizens are informed of public meetings, but for reasons known only to them, they still choose not to participate (Turcanu & Perko, 2014). However, Christens and Speer (2011, p.253) failed to understand much about what causes some people to stay involved in activities such as community organising over time, while others fall into inactivity. Gaventa and McGee (2010) contradict McComas *et al. (*2010) when they argue that there has been extensive work done over the last decade which focused on citizen participation and citizen mobilisation with the purpose of strengthening the voice of civil society in governance and development programmes. However, regardless of numerous research findings about citizen participation, this knowledge has not been converted into more active participatory practices. Citizens are still reluctant to participate and scholars continue to disagree on the sufficiency of prevailing knowledge (Gaventa & McGee, 2010).

Leighter (2009, p.5) asserts that while it is fruitful to examine participants' perceptions of public meetings, innovative meeting designs, and meeting outcomes, the analysis of the contours of the channels of communication provides a new and useful way to examine public participation.

McComas (2006, p.165) quoted the work of Cole and Caputo (1984), Kasperson (1986) and Kihl (1985) who noted the absence from the research, on public meetings' studies that examines citizen attitudes toward public meetings. Typically, studies that mention public meeting participants do not include interviews with participants. McComas (2006, p.165)

further emphasised that while understanding the views of participants is important, it is perhaps just as important to understand the views of citizens who have opportunities to attend public meetings but choose not to, in efforts to determine what encourages or discourages participation.

1.8. Research questions

Punch (2014) indicated that the research questions outline what the researcher is trying to find out with regard to the research problem at hand. This assertion is supported by Bryman (2012) who posits that research questions are questions that provide explicit statements of what it is the researcher wants to find out. These research questions aim to give direction to the study through identification of what the research wants to investigate. The researcher has consulted the literature to confirm that the problem to be studied has never been investigated before within the South African context, in particular, the COJ.

The main research question for this study is:

What are the factors that hinder public participation in public meetings within the COJ?

This is followed by the sub-questions of:

- What are the structures, mechanisms and processes used by the COJ to promote public participation?
- What role do the COJ`s governance, accountability and management processes play in ensuring that citizens actively participate in public meetings?
- To what extent is the COJ accountable in ensuring that there is public participation in public meetings?
- What is the COJ leadership approach on public participation? Does the COJ follow a top-down approach wherein the policy makers draft and implement policies without acknowledging the citizens, or a bottom-up approach wherein decisions taken are informed by the consultation done with the citizens first?

1.9. Significance of the study

Most studies conducted with regard to public participation do not focus on the role that governance plays in enhancing or hindering public participation; the accountability of the local government to ensure public participation and the management processes for public participating in public meetings. In addition, the existing studies have not used the bottom-up plus top-down combined research approaches. This was done in the current project, to

counter-pose potentially competing perspectives on public participation in one geographical locality. It is hoped therefore, that the findings of this study will improve practice and policy decision making. The research also has a practical impact in potentially assisting the COJ to review and improve its current public participation policy, processes and systems. The study is significant as there is no other known empirical study of public participation that focuses on the factors hindering public participation in public meetings within the COJ. In addition, the findings and recommendations of this study could assist other Gauteng cities and metropolitan areas, such as Tshwane, Ekurhuleni, Mogale City and Sedibeng municipalities, by providing insights on how to improve participatory practice at local government level in the province.

The theoretical significance is obtained through exploring a case study of citizen participation in the COJ and testing prevailing theory about public participation in local government governance processes. It is envisaged that in its practical application, the findings will help ensure that citizens of the COJ themselves are afforded improved opportunities and platforms to engage on COJ programmes with COJ departments and its entities.

1.10. Structure of the thesis

This thesis is divided into six chapters. The order of the chapters is:

Chapter One: Introduction and background

This chapter introduced the topic and the background to the study. The researcher gave the context of the study and explained the significance thereof. In this chapter, the researcher also presented the problem statement, research questions and purpose statement. This chapter is followed by the literature review.

Chapter Two: Literature review

In this chapter, the researcher examines literature on public participation in public meetings. The researcher gives definitions of public meetings and examines the different public participation concepts to demonstrate familiarity and subsequently, builds a conceptual framework for this study. Furthermore, the researcher discusses the global practices on public participation by drawing on other countries' experiences.

Chapter Three: Research methodology

This chapter focuses on the approach the research took in the collection of data. The tools that the researcher employed are outlined. In this chapter, the researcher discusses sampling, interviews, focus group methodology and document analysis methodology, as well as how data were collated and analysed in the study. It furthermore reflects on the limitations of the study.

Chapter Four: Presentation of data

This chapter of the thesis presents the data collected from the respondents and also puts forward data collected from the City of Johannesburg documents. The presentation of the findings uses the direct quotes from the respondents and the summary of the views of the respondents. These presentations build on the details gained from the documentary analysis that helped to inform the researcher as to how many of the contexts and conditions helped to determine the perceptions of the citizens.

Chapter Five: Analysis of data

This chapter presents the data analysis and emerged themes which have been collated from the previous chapters of the research.

Chapter Six: Conclusion and recommendations

This chapter ties together the insights gained from the study and offers recommendations and strategies for consideration, based on the findings of the study. The limitations are reiterated and future studies are recommended.

1.11. Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher introduced the topic and provided a background to the study. This chapter gave a brief outline of the background around public participation in public meetings within the City of Johannesburg. Furthermore, it set out the problem statement, purpose statement and research questions and explained the significance of the study.

2 CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the related literature review on public participation in public meetings; the governance model; accountability and management of public participation processes. In addition, it outlines the theoretical framework underpinning this study.

Merriam (2009, p.72) asserts that a researcher should find out what has already been researched, for him/her to contribute significantly in their field of study. This, she argued, will equip the researcher in establishing the knowledge gap and thereby contributing to the existing body of knowledge. In her own words, Merriam (2009, p.72) argues that "by commanding knowledge of previous studies and writing on a topic offers a point of reference for discussing the contribution that will be made by the further research to advance the knowledge base in the area". This relates to what Kumar (2014, p.48) indicated, who viewed the literature review as a process that reinforces a theoretical background to a study. By doing so, the researcher inaugurates a linkage between the researcher's proposed topic and what has already been studied; lastly, it enables the researcher to demonstrate the contribution of his/her findings to the existing body of knowledge relating to the project. This will help to integrate the research findings into the existing body of knowledge. This was supported by Black (1976) who explained that the literature review is intended to bring to light for the researcher any relevant information pertaining to the topic being studied, which relates to what Wisker (2008) indicated that the literature review is generally done with the aim to find evidence in the academic discourse to establish a need for the proposed research.

The literature review in the current study summarises ideas gained from literature on the perceptions of citizens towards public meetings, in particular, those held at the level of local municipal governance. The researcher has utilised the existing literature to understand the knowledge gap on the issues around public participation in public meetings. After engagement with the literature, as this chapter demonstrates, it is confirmed that there is little knowledge on the research-based engagement with citizens to determine the factors that they consider as obstacles towards participating in public meetings. This is the focus of semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions to be conducted in this study. The previous scholars have thus advised that a study of this nature be conducted to explore further the factors that hinder public participation in public meetings. They advised that it would be ideal to have focus group discussions and interviews with the citizens to ascertain their views and opinions on the

subject under studied (Besley, McComas & Trumbo, 2006, p.693). In this chapter, the researcher therefore identifies the elements that emerged from the literature review that citizens had considered as obstacles for participating in public meetings.

2.2 Trends in prevailing literature on public participation

The current research utilised the concepts which were drawn from literature on public participation, which is inclusive of the structure of public meetings, the process towards public participation, accountability of the officials to citizens, and specifically, governance within the COJ and associated policy implementation.

The notion of governance stands central to these variations of themes in the literature. Management, as defined by Hatfield-Dodds and Cook (2007), refers to the processes of decision making, coordination and resource deployment within a given normative and regulatory setting, whereas governance, as defined by Cundill and Fabricius (2010) entails the interactions among formal and informal norms, rules, structures and processes, which determine how decisions are made and power is shared, responsibility exercised and accountability ensured.

The literature review focuses on the management, accountability and governance of public meetings in South Africa and thereafter, it is cascaded to the COJ, Gauteng. The literature consists mainly of published journal articles sourced electronically using Google Scholar, Ebscohost and JStor, as well as books in the relevant fields of study. Access to the electronic journals was provided by the University of the Witwatersrand. The search strings used were “public meetings” and “public participation”.

Kumar (2014, p. 51) advised researchers that in pursuing to establish what is important in the literature review one needs to consider finding out what questions remained unanswered, and suggestions made for further research. This study reviewed literature with specific reference to the questions the research sought to answer i.e. the role facilitated by the COJ`s governance, accountability and management processes to ensure that citizens participate in public meetings; the structures, mechanisms and processes used by the COJ to promote public participation, the level of accountability in the COJ to enhance public participation in the public meetings and the factors that hinder public participation in public meetings within the COJ.

2.3 Background around public participation

Paradza, Mokwena and Richards (2010) point out that with the liberation of South Africa and the associated shift towards democratic local government, a number of challenges were faced, which relates to addressing the underdevelopment of the regions and municipalities. This was also to ensure that there would be participatory governance at the local level, wherein the local government has been expected to improve on rendering services. There was also an expectation of local government to expedite service delivery at local level, in response to the above challenges. Furthermore, there was a need for policy on developmental local government where emphasis was placed on ensuring participation in the planning phase. This was recommended therefore as per the guidelines from the 1998 white paper on local government (Paradza *et al*., 2010). Paradza *et al.* (2010) further cited a 2007 review of local government by the Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG), the purpose of which was to examine the existing participatory mechanism which aimed to better the participation of citizens towards shared decision making with government.

Furthermore, the Public Service Commission (PSC) (2010) recognises that, as per Section 195(1)(e) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, public participation is important. In this context, local government structures and government at large need to respond to the needs of the people and the citizens should be mobilised to participate in public policymaking. The PSC (2010) also points out that Sections 59, 72 and 118 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa specify that both the national and provincial levels of government are mandated to facilitate public participation. Democratic governance will also be strengthened if citizens are involved in policy making and implementation. The PSC (2010) further elaborated on its role over the past years wherein government departments were investigated on how they facilitate public participation processes in the public service. The investigations revealed that there is room for improvement. The PSC (2010) also advised that each department puts in place the guidelines which give direction on how public participation will be conducted, the target audience and how participation will inform policy and practice.

The Municipal Systems Act (Act No. 32 of 2000) has mandated local government to utilise mechanisms for community participation. These include petitions, complaints lodged by members of the community, and when appropriate, municipalities must notify or ask for public comments, and invite the community to public meetings and to hearings of council meetings. Regardless of these mechanisms, the challenge of participation still exists within most of the municipalities of South Africa, including the COJ. The process of public participation has been criticised by Stewart (1995), some year ago, when he indicated that often the process of public

participation is highly utilised when consultation is done with the citizens and is minimal at a partnership level where decisions are made. Public participation is therefore a tool which is useful for the promotion of accountable government (Hollis, Ham & Ambler, 1992). In this context, the COJ has been mandated to ensure that there is effective and efficient public participation by the citizens within the COJ.

2.4 Comparative perspectives on public participation

This section compares the public participation from different countries and extracts perspectives which will assist in benchmarking the case study of the COJ. In the United States of America (USA), a study was conducted by Wang (2001) on public participation and it was evident that participation is facilitated by an administrative system which is open and accountable. Public employees also have a role in encouraging the involvement of the public through accountability for their operations, efforts and performance.

Wang (2001) emphasised that when the local government demonstrates good understanding and prompt response towards the needs of the public, it will result into citizen satisfaction. However, Wang (2001) acknowledged that there is still a challenge of public involvement despite various mechanisms of public participation utilised by different cities. The challenge identified was significant and relevant to management functions, including budgeting, personnel, and procurement functions where citizens are not interested due to the technical nature of management. The study was conducted with public managers on their perceptions about public participation; therefore Wang (2001) recommended a study which would determine the perceptions of the citizens.

Stewart (1995) saw organisational conditions as vital from an earlier stage, in the provision of efficient service delivery to citizens. He further emphasised that the provision of service to the public might be restricted by the capacity of staff, both professional and non-professionals (Stewart, 1995). This was confirmed by Chirwa (2014), who recorded about countries like Malawi who had been struggling with effective public participation due to the failure of local elections since 1999. According to Chirwa (2014), the incomplete process of decentralisation also resulted in local governance structures remaining weak and unable to provide the citizenry with venues, avenues and channels for popular participation. The local government system in Malawi has been recorded as being weak, resulting in the lack of administrative capacity, lack of experience and inadequate grassroots participation in local authority affairs (Chirwa, 2014).

This current study compared the governance processes in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to assist in understanding the COJ systems of governance when comparing it with other countries. This contributes to a base for understanding the practices of public participation and illuminates how other developing countries have dealt with public participation issues that concern the three major themes of participation at the local level in this study: governance, accountability and management.

The process of governance in Botswana, as recorded by Mothusi (2010, p.4), is vested in the powers of chiefs who are given executive, legislative and judicial powers to administer within their jurisdictions. According to Mothusi (2010, p.5), Botswana utilised a top-down approach with regard to public participation. It should also be noted that the public policies and programmes geared towards improving people`s standard of living were formulated and implemented by political leaders at the national level with the assistance of highly educated public officials. The Ministries and local authorities in Botswana, as recorded by Mothusi (2010, p.5), implement policies and programmes which have already been determined and approved by the cabinet. Councillors are utilised as vehicles responsible for representing, promoting and protecting the interests, demands and aspirations of the electorate. This is done with administrative assistance to bring services closer to the people (Mothusi, 2010, p.7).

This is not the case in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where Nkongolo (2010, p.26) recorded the DRC as having struggled with efficiency in governance due to their lack of a democratic culture and the ineffectiveness of institutions. This had a negative impact on the government to put strong mechanisms in place. Nkongolo (2010, p.50) further stated that local officials within the DRC lacked full managerial and fiscal capacity to execute their functions efficiently with regard to co-ordination of public participation.

Comparing it with Lesotho prior to 1966, as recorded by Mosoeunyane (2010, p.55), the chieftainship structure was reformed and consolidated to become the local administrative structure of central government at the local level, using the laws of Lerotholi (this laws covered a variety of political issues from succession to authoritative structures existing between chiefs and paramount chief) as the main instrument of governance. By then, Mosoeunyane (2010, p.58) described that the district councils were indirectly elected as they are representative of community councils with the appointment of councillors on a five-year term. There is no clear power and functional relationship between offices of the district administrator and the district council secretary (Mosoeunyane, 2010, p.61). These tensions make it difficult to facilitate proper participation of civil society organisations and other stakeholders in local government which results in the lack of accountability within the district councils.

The local authorities in Mauritius, as recorded by Darga (2010, p.105), managed decentralised responsibilities with limited and poor capacity and rarely had efficient and effective accountability mechanisms. The decline in the quality of elected personnel in turn, has resulted in the total decline in the quality of local government policies and management. Towns are administered by municipal councils whose councillors are appointed for a five-year term by the local government (Darga, 2010, p.108). From the comparison of different states, it became evident that participation has been a challenge facing local government across multiple geographical sites. Hence the root causes need to be thoroughly investigated to improve enhanced participatory practice and efficient service delivery.

2.5 Factors influencing the perceptions of citizens towards public meetings

The study focuses on the views of citizens towards public meetings as well as factors influencing those views and perceptions. From the literature reviewed, a series of factors (outlined in the rest of the section) are identified as contributing to the perceptions of citizens towards public meetings and public participation in general. In line with the primary thrusts of this study, the researcher has categorised the factors hindering participation towards public meetings into three themes: those of accountability, management and governance.

2.5.1 Factors related to the accountability theme

This section covers factors that citizens generally, both in South Africa, and as reflected in the international literature, consider as obstacles hindering participation in public meetings and which are relevant to the theme of accountability. This assists in determining the themes for the fieldwork and the subsequent data analysis, in this instance, specifically in relation to the theme of accountability of local government. Callahan (2007, p.109) defined accountability as the response towards the desired and expected performance. This was supported by Agere (2000, p.44) who defined administrative accountability as the obligation to respond to fulfill an assignment and accepted duties within the framework of the authority, and resources provided. Defined in this manner, administrative accountability generally applies to public servants, particularly permanent secretaries, directors, and heads of departments or chief executives of public enterprises. This section therefore covered the processes and structures utilised to ensure accountability of the local government with regard to public participation.

2.5.1.1. The structure of the public meeting

The researcher focused on the structure of the public meeting with the view to understand how the public meetings are structured and whether the structure of the public meetings influences the perceptions of citizens towards public meetings. It was evident in McComas *et al.* (2010) and Besley *et al.* (2012, p.355) that the decision and willingness to attend future meetings depends on the structure of the public meeting that the citizen had attended previously. McComas (2006) and McComas (2009) asserts citizens require assurance after the meeting, of how their comments would be incorporated into the meeting outcome and future processes. She asserted that this will help to demonstrate that the meeting was not pretence. This was supported by Abelson *et al*. (2003, p.248) who stated that evidence suggests that face-to-face processes are time consuming for the public and as a result they might not be willing to participate, especially if they cannot be assured that their involvement will make a difference. Gutas (2005) conducted a study in Cape Town that sought to shed light on the aspect of presentation of information. He observed that presentations made at the meetings were technical and infused with jargon, which was not conducive to the relaying of information to the public due to the general level of education; some of the citizens felt left out in the process. Some of them also felt intimidated by the style of presentation. It is evident that those who are charged with the administration of public meetings must utilise appropriate and relevant language suitable for the target audience.

Simonsen and Robbins (2000) echoed his concern with the content of the information being discussed in the public meetings when they recommend paying attention to the amount of information and how it is presented. They recommend using graphs, figures and tables targeted to the language of the lay-person. The authors advised that the first step to gather the preferences of the citizens is to design a participation process that provides the information necessary to educate and inform the participants, in the language they understand. Halverson (2003, p.536) asserts that a wide variety of people find local meetings use time efficiently and are carefully scheduled; utilising convenient and accessible sites for discussion. Campt and Freeman (2010, p.3) assert that public officials should construct meetings differently from how they are typically organised and they therefore referred to the traditional structure for meetings which involve everyone listening to featured “spokespeople”, followed by a relatively small number of those in attendance giving a short speech at the microphone. These authors had criticised this structure of the public meeting as they indicated that the format created the result of public meeting participation being like that at sporting events wherein attendees are primarily observers who express support or opposition to the central action in soft or loud cheers, boos, or side comments (Campt & Freeman, 2010, p.3). Lee (2014, p.394) asserts that public meetings have different types, formats, and structures, and their effects on efficient administration may not be identical.

2.5.1.2. The citizens' understanding and perception of the public participation process

The researcher focused furthermore on the citizens' understanding and perceptions of the public participation process to investigate if the citizens' perception and the understanding of the public participation process influence their views about public participation. Besley *et al. (*2012) linked the thoughts of citizens towards participation to understanding why they may or may not choose to participate in local decision making when expected to do so. McComas *et al. (*2006); Decker*, et al.* (2009); McComas *et al.* (2010) and Besley *et al. (*2012) emphasised that citizens should be encouraged to participate in public meetings when they are offered an opportunity to realise their worth in decision making. Besley *et al. (*2012) stated that the citizens' views about the public institutions, especially the government agencies in the direct ambit of the participatory action, play a role in the decision whether to participate in a public meeting or not. This was also emphasised by Edwards (2006) who articulates that citizens who participate in public meetings believe that they can affect the outcome. Dahlgren (2009), however, argued that people`s feelings of powerlessness about how politics works, citizens: feeling that the mechanisms for democracy do not allow for their views to have much impact, and inequality in terms of class, gender and race, substantially hinder the extent to which it can be legitimately claimed that individuals are free and equal in their approach to participation. Instead many will not feel free to participate (Dahlgren, 2009).

Halverson (2003, p.536) indicates that when the citizens believed that their inputs are considered seriously and that the decisions taken replicate their consideration, there is increased satisfaction. Citizens are often turned off by public meeting processes, and even those who participate in such meetings often feel that their voices will not make a difference (McComas, Besley & Trumbo, 2006). These authors also assert that the individual who has confidence that the issue to be discussed in a public meeting affects him/her, has knowledge of the time and location of the hearing, is free from competing demands, views him/herself in a responsible role, is well informed about the project and believes his/her inputs and availability will have an impact, will be likely to attend a hearing.

Callahan (2007, p.167) asserts that when the citizens have lack of knowledge, information and proficiency necessary to communicate effectively it is difficult for citizens to participate. It was also noted that this lack of knowledge by the citizens can lead to marginalisation on the citizens involvement in the participatory process and dismissal of the citizens inputs by the administrators. Agere (2000, p.49) emphasised that there should be civic education of citizens with regard to them understanding their rights and duties, and their readiness to act

accordingly, when expected to do so. Another common barrier to meaningful participation, noted by Frisby and Bowman (1996), is a lack of participant knowledge. When this occurs, participants are less likely to provide valuable information.

2.5.1.3. Citizens' perceptions and attitudes towards public officials

The objective of the current section is to help the researcher determine whether the citizens' perceptions and attitudes towards public officials influence their response to public meetings. It was evident in Brian (2004, p.48) that most participants who participate in public meetings do not attend to support the officials but to criticise. This attitude by citizens for criticising the officials in a public forum creates the perception that officials are out of touch with the community. The purpose of the critique to the officials displayed by citizens in a public forum symbolise that the officials have lost touch with the community. According to McComas *et al. (*2010) and Besley *et al.* (2012), it was also evident that the decisions and willingness to participate in future meetings is also informed by the citizens' views about the public officials and views about public meetings. Besley *et al. (*2012) also linked the belief in the credibility of the government sponsors of the meetings and perceptions that meetings provide an effective platform for effective communication with the satisfaction with public meetings. Besley *et al.* (2012) stated that the way citizens perceive the officials and the public meetings may be affected by citizens' experiences in public meetings. Boholm (2008) confirmed that when citizens lack trust in the organisers, lack interest and eagerness with the anticipation of open conflicts that might arise in the public meetings, they choose to stay away from meetings which lead to failure of the meetings. McComas *et al. (*2010) and Besley *et al.* (2012) elucidate that public meetings are presented variably in formality and format and this is informed by the context of the meeting and who the organisers are. This might influence the participation of citizens towards public meetings.

Irvin and Stansbury (2004) suggested that the only way to stimulate new policies in communities where anti-government sentiment runs high is through winning the hearts of the citizens by regularly meeting with them and ultimately gaining their trust and friendship. Franklin and Ebdon (2002) confirmed this when they indicated that city officials have to consider who will participate and who will identify and invite the participants, the criteria by which participants will be selected, and the reasons why citizens will choose to become involved. McComas (2003, p.171) assured that the citizen satisfaction may also be influenced by the credibility of the government agencies conducting public meetings. When citizens are sceptically convinced of the credibility of the agencies that generally conduct public meetings, it may negatively influence their satisfaction. In turn, when the credibility of the government

agencies conducting the public meetings is viewed positively by the citizens' as the source of information, there is increased citizen satisfaction (McComas, 2003, p.171). Callahan (2007, p.158) warns of the reluctance by public administrators to share information, when they do not allow citizens a voice in the process but instead choose to depend on their professional and technical expertise. This reluctance might lead to citizens attempting to block or defy decisions taken with the view to critique and shame the public officials. As to the common agency complaint that the public does not come out to the meetings because people do not care, they will care and they will come if they understand the purpose of the meeting, how the outcome affects them, and the role that they are expected to play in helping the agency reach a decision (Cogan, 1992, p.39).

Agere (2000, p.42) asserts that the public officials' accountability for their actions is one of the main issues in the evolving democratisation process in many countries. The author also referred citizens' mandatory power over those who seek to exercise political power as the most visible yardstick phenomenon of competitive elections. Agere (2000, p.42) spoke of the enforcement of accountability of the governors (both elected and appointed) to the governed through platforms such as parliamentary institutions, and judicial institutions like the Ombudsman. The author further asserts that the Ombudsman receives complaints from citizens, investigates these complaints with the aim to make recommendations on how they can be redressed at no cost to citizens. In general, citizens can send their complaints directly to the Ombudsman by mail or by telephone.

Campt and Freeman (2010, p.3) assert that public officials should convene public meetings in a manner that would make citizens to feel as though they were invited to express themselves. They should feel connected with others, and they should feel hopeful about the prospect of positively affecting their surroundings. A different opinion was raised by Callahan (2007, p.158) who had observed that; there are conflicts and assurance of ineffective participation in meetings, as the managers determine the venue, the time, location, format and that can dramatically influence how the public participates. There will be a sense of frustration and distrust on both sides due to the participatory planning phase happening at a later stage when the issues have already been framed, the agenda set and most decisions made. The response of citizens towards this may be reactive and judgmental, often critical and unsupportive of the process and the outcome (Callahan, 2007, p.158).

Mohammadi *et al.* (2010, p.576) assert that the tendency for higher levels of participation are portrayed by citizens with positive attitudes towards the local government, the councillor and council performance. They further stated that the decision by local people to respond positively

towards local government issues is influenced by the positive attitudes of citizens which has an impact on the support citizens offer and participate in local government matters. Thus, understanding citizen attitudes can help to assess the degree or level of citizen participation in council issues. This relates to what Kosecik and Sagbas (2004) mentioned that the interest of local people in local government affairs has an impact on the public participation at local level. The interest portrayed by citizens to meaningfully participate in the decision-making process of local government keeps it under control thereby increasing efficiency and effectiveness of local government. Cogan (1992, p.7) asserts that citizens pay attention to leaders with enthusiasm which is visible through their words and deeds. It was confirmed by Cogan (1992, p.7) that citizens will find a way to fight back whether by disrupting the proceedings or some other way when they feel they are not treated with respect. Though their arrogant manners would lead us to believe that they are self-confident, the opposite is true, leaders hide behind an unreasonably strict structure and discourage citizen participation and interaction because they are afraid that the meeting will get out of their control. This was supported by Adams (2004, p.46) who asserts that officials may view the turnout of citizens at public meetings as evidence of popular support.

2.5.2. Factors related to the management theme

This section covers factors identified in the literature that citizens consider as obstacles hindering public participation in public meetings in relation to the theme of management. These details further assisted in assessing the process of managing public participation, bearing in mind both the study`s theoretical considerations and the applied issue of optimising participation in public meetings in practice, also with special reference to public meetings in the COJ. The sub-sections that follow, deal with the guidelines that arise from the literature.

2.5.1.1 The physical location where the public meeting was held

Tuner and Weninger (2005) assert that the active response of citizens towards public meetings is influenced by the proximity of meeting locations where citizens resides. These authors therefore advised administrators to select venues that are conveniently accessible for the targeted citizens to reach when public meetings are convened. This relates exactly to what Piotrowski and Borry (2010) had observed, that the physical space and location of where the public meeting is held has an impact on the level of citizen participation in the meeting. The implied message by these authors was that there should be transparency in the invitation for public meetings wherein a description about a location and directions to the venue or room where the meeting will be held should be made clear to the attendees of the public meetings.

From the literature, it is evident that public meetings should be accessible and be held in places well known to the target community.

This was also emphasised by Irvin and Stansbury (2004, p.62) when they advised that administrators should consider geographical locations of the key stakeholders /target audience when arranging for the public meetings to ensure that the targeted audience reach the venue for meetings with ease. Citizens should have enough income to attend meetings without harming their ability to provide for their families (Irvin & Stanbury, 2004, p.62). These authors also identified regular face-to-face meetings as another obstacle to public participation in public meetings especially when the region is geographically dispersed and presents other obstacles (such as heavy traffic) (Irvin & Stanbury, 2004, p.62). Hock, Anderson and Potoski (2012, p.221) articulated the challenges presented by members of the public who do not show up for venues designed for their voices to be heard, although they require their inputs to be recognised. Gutas (2005) identified other factors affecting participation of disadvantaged groups such as women, farm workers and people with disabilities such as the failure to make arrangements concerning transport and using proper meeting times. He further ascertains that if these issues are taken into consideration, it will encourage participation in the public meetings. Russell and Vidler (2000, p.59) found out that citizens tends to prioritise on the provision for their families and will avail less time for public meetings which makes it difficult for them to participate and be engaged in public meetings.

2.5.1.2 The administrative role for managing public meetings

This section covers the administrative role for managing public meetings. Within the COJ, the administrative role for managing public meetings is done through the ward governance department by the relevant appointed ward administrator. The administrator works hand-in-hand with the ward councillor to ensure that public meetings are convened. The ward structural component that assists in the facilitation of the public meetings lies in the form of ward councillor and the ward committee members (COJ IDP, 2015). The ward councillors and ward committee structures are accountable to the governance committee to ensure that public participation processes in the COJ are undertaken. The COJ has established a ward committee system which consists of the councillor representing the ward and committee members. The councillor must also chair the committee, consisting of not more than 10 other persons (COJ IDP, 2015). These are the ward committee members who are allocated various portfolios to form the ward committee for a particular municipal ward (COJ IDP, 2015). The ward committees are seen as the vehicle for deepening local democracy and the instrument through which a vibrant and involved citizenry can be established. It is at the local level within

wards that all development issues converge. Ward committees serve as a link between the citizens and government, as well as a method of engagement and a platform to enhance two-way communication between the two stakeholders (COJ IDP, 2015). This creates collaboration in terms of stakeholders sharing responsibility for their own local development. The ward committees receive their mandate from the Municipal Structures Act No.117 of 1998 and are expected to enhance participatory democracy in local government.

The latter part of the section focuses on the literature reviews regarding the subject matter. Lee (2014, p.388) confirmed that there had been no scholarly investigation on the effects of public meetings on administrative performance and therefore advised that it is worthwhile to investigate this further. The author advised on the efficiency of administration to produce and implement public policies without wasting resources. In promoting the efficiency of administrative performance, methods of citizen participation such as public meetings, can provide venues for policy stakeholders to discuss policy problems and resolve possible controversies (Lee, 2014, p.388).

Callahan (2007, p.158) warns of the public manager within a conventional participation setting who ensures that there are administrative structures and procedures in place, controls the ability of the public to influence the agenda and the process. The administrators are therefore given the authority to control and co-ordinate the process through these politically and socially constructed frameworks. This will enable citizens to be invited to the table when the manager deems it appropriate, usually after the issues have been framed and decisions have been made (Callahan, 20017, p.158).

Piotrowski and Borry (2010) advised on the process for sending invitations towards public meetings attendance where the administrators were advised to ensure inclusivity in the invitation for every relevant individual, besides detailing the dates and times of the public meeting. The rationale for focusing on the administrative machinery was seen by Agere (2000, p.24) as a platform for the public sector reform to meaningfully and effectively manage. This is done on the basis of an assumption that it is only the strong state that can create a conducive environment for meaningful participation.

Liewellyn (2005) reported of the conflicting ideals that exist between the bureaucratic sphere and the open sphere of the public discourse which poses a classic dilemma for people who organise public meetings. At the same time, Besley *et al.* (2012) advised those who are responsible for managing the public participation process that they should not only be concerned with the public meetings separately, but they should consider the views of the citizens on the process of engaging them as well.

2.5.1.3 Communication channels for public meetings

This section outlines various communication channels utilised for convening public meetings. These also assist in determining the effectiveness of the communication channels and their relevance to the targeted communities. The following public participation communication channels with the citizens are utilised in the COJ as outlined in the IDP reviewed document (2015/16, p.78) IDP/Budget roadshows, public hearings, public meetings, workshops, public participation open days/weeks, community panels, focus groups, community information, radio, feedback sessions, social facilitation, surveys and website. Piotrowski and Borry (2010) noted the expectations for public bodies by the law to sensitise the communities through giving them notices in advance and he advised that this would give the public time to arrange for the public meetings. Eschenfelder (2010) indicated that the communication for public meetings can be done through utilisation of regional billboards, as well as having conversations over the internet when access has been gained for citizens at private locations and the availability of computers for those without access. It must be noted that the study is done in South Africa with the COJ as the case study. The study assessed the processes followed by the COJ in giving out notification to the public about public meetings. Amongst others, it also assessed whether there was enough time allocated to ensure that all citizens get a chance to receive the notice about a meeting.

McComas *et al.* (2006) relayed publicity methods such as websites, local newspapers, including both online and print which were identified as useful when communicating about public meetings. Hock (2012) furthermore suggested the relevance of invitation calls in the improvement of attendance towards civic meetings. With regard to the current study, it can be noted that the COJ invites the citizens for public meetings through the ward governance department and the administrative role is facilitated by ward administrators responsible for each ward (COJ IDP, 2015). Irvin and Stansbury (2004, p.60) quoted, the unsuccessful effort which aimed to attract interested stakeholders to a public meeting through the insertion of articles in the local newspapers, distribution of brochures around the region (at malls, trails, neighborhood groups, sporting goods stores, etc.), direct contact with landowners, phone calls to early respondents of the brochures, and free pizza at conveniently scheduled meetings. Hulbert and Gupta (2015) also warn that those who are charged with the administration of public meetings need to assess the methods of engagement best suitable and applicable for communicating a particular issue to the citizens. Conroy and Gordon (2003, p.20) advised those that involve citizens more often that participants of the meetings receives meaningful learning opportunities through the alternatives to the traditional public meeting approach, especially utilising technology.

Snider (2003, p.23) positioned the beginning of a public meeting through a posted agenda and confined the topics for which comments and votes would later be allowed. The timelines, accuracy and distribution of the meeting agenda was identified by Snider (2003) as proportionally linked with the democratic quality of public participation at a meeting. Snider (2003, p.23) asserts that posted agendas are for the benefit of the broader public; however, they were seen to be highly incomplete.

2.5.2 Factors related to governance

This section covers the factors that citizens consider as obstacles hindering public participation in public meetings related to the theme of governance. The assessment of this part of the literature helps the researcher to understand the phenomenon and ask the right questions when it comes to fieldwork. In addition, the assessment positions the applied dimension of the study which concerns the COJ governance model towards public participation in public meetings.

Agere (2000, p.7) identified key elements of good governance wherein he acknowledged that whilst there may be no best way of achieving good governance, the following stand out as the most common elements: accountability, transparency, combating corruption, participatory governance and an enabling legal/judicial framework:

- *Accountability*: This refers to the expectations from the public towards elected or appointed individuals and organisations to account for specific actions, activities or decisions to the public from whom they received a public mandate of authority. Accountability therefore in a narrow sense, is concerned with the ability to account for the allocation, use and control i.e. budgeting, accounting and auditing. In a broader sense, accountability focuses on the establishment and enforcement of rules and regulations for corporate governance.
- *Transparency*: This is broadly defined as government policies and its intentions made known to the public. This is done through scrutinisation of public accounts, the provision of public participation in government policy making and implementation, as well as allowing contestation over choices impacting the lives of citizens. The process is also inclusive of availability of accurate and timely economic and market conditions for public scrutiny.
- *Combating corruption*: This refers to the process of private gains received through the abuse of public office or public trust. This definition covers most forms of corruption in both the public and private sectors. Good governance is measured though the ability to combat corruption. The manifestation of corruption can be through the individual,

organisational or institutional. In public management, the integrity of the public servants declines through the inadequate legislative oversight of government. The authority and effectiveness of public institutions is worn down through corrupt activities. The fight against corruption can be improved through the effectiveness and transparency of economic policies and administrative reform. This can contribute powerfully to enhance good governance.

- Stakeholder *participation*: Participation is defined as a process that provides stakeholders with the oversight authority over public policy decisions, and shared control over resources and institutions that affect their lives, thereby providing a check on the power of government. In the context of governance, participation is therefore concerned with the empowerment of citizens, including women, and addressing the interplay between the broad range of civil societies, actors and actions. This is inclusive of creating an enabling regulatory framework and economic environment which legitimately generates the demands and monitors policies and actions of government. It occurs at various levels i.e. at grassroots, through local and civic institutions at the regional and national levels, through flexible and decentralised forms of government and also in the private sector.

2.5.2.1 Management of public meetings from a policy perspective

This section focused on the management of public meetings in relation to policy. Gaventa and McGee (2010) assert the creation of policy reforms that seek to engage with the citizens' which are important to the lives of poor people and for achieving social justice. They stated that, through the literature, the state has created invited spaces focusing on strengthening the citizen voice and engagement in policy processes, mainly through participation. It was also portrayed through the literature that policy making has not been regarded as the process that continuously engages with the citizens (Gaventa & McGee, 2010). Gaventa and McGee (2010) also explained the strengthening of citizen engagement and the influence in the policy making process through the voice and advocacy of literature. Reddy (1996, p.3) asserts the eligibility of citizens to participate in politics and that they are not only concerned with expressing their views, but are also part of the political system denoted through democracy. Section 40(1)(c) of the Constitution provides that every person shall have the right 'to participate in peaceful political activity intended to influence the composition and policies of the government'. Aspden and Brich (2005) identified a number of factors and issues that affects the public's attitude towards participation in local affairs and decision-making. These include citizen interest and understanding of local government, citizen satisfaction about

involvement, citizen trust of local government and its members, and previous experience of voluntary participation.

According to Irvin and Stansbury (2004), stakeholder interactions that exclude several public participation methods have failed to result in the expected policy outcomes. Halvorsen, (2003) asserts that acceptance of policy outcome by stakeholders allows for participants to believe that the agency is responsive to public concerns.

Callahan (2007, p.183) emphasised that citizens tends to be gratified as customers and clients of government when they are satisfied with the public sector and the overall implementation of public policy, and will thereby seek less active involvement in the deliberative process. This results in the belief that the government will do the right thing and act in the best interest of the public. Citizens requires active participation when there is greater dissatisfaction or frustration with government`s ability to effectively design and implement public programs (Callahan, 2007). When citizens no longer trust the government to do the right thing, they become more active and involved and demand a greater role in the deliberative process (Callahan, 2007, p.183).

Agere (2000, p.6) puts emphasis on the involvement of citizens in the public policy issues as they are becoming international and involve more stakeholders and he also pointed out that managing the public service is becoming increasingly complex. Agere (2000, p.95) emphasised the restoration of confidence in the population through formulation and implementation of transparent policies that may inhibit participation in the development of the nation. The author also warned of the tendency to abuse political and economic power, which then results in the absence of transparency and accountability where the government exercises absolute power.

2.5.2.2 Governance as a structural component

This section outlines the role of governance within the local government environment as well as governance in general as a perspective. The section further outlines the role of NGOs in public participation. Democratic local governance has been defined by Blair (2001) and Cogan (2004) as a form of governance that is accountable and accessible to its citizens. Two main components central to the heart of the democratic governance are identified which are participation and accountability (Blair, 2000). At the same time, Edwards (2006) articulates that citizens who believe that they can affect the outcome, tends to participate in public meetings. Pierre (2006, p.4) saw problems increasing in the government co-ordination, as a result, there had been an increase in the growing interest in governance. This was done to

ensure that public and private projects share the same number of objectives which do not obstruct each other. Pierre (2006, p.4) referred to governance as the process where a wide variety of actors with different purposes and objectives such as political actors and institutions, corporate interests, civil society and transformational organisations are coherently co-ordinated. Agere (2000, p.2) defined good governance as the ability of the nation to manage its affairs through exercising of political, economic and administrative authority. This includes the complex array of mechanisms, processes, relationships and institutions through which citizens manage affairs involving public life. Emphasis was done by Agere (2000, p.2) who stated that the current conditions showed that governance is no longer the exclusive domain of the state. Agere (2000, p.6) further asserted that good governance is based on the consensus of the broader society pertaining to amongst other things: participation, transparency and accountability with the aim to achieve political, social and economic priorities. This process allows for decision making processes regarding the allocation of resources where the voices of the poorest and most vulnerable are heard. Bevir (2009, p.3) outlined the importance of governance to be linked with an awareness of securing order through the resemblance of power and authority, even in the absence of state activity. This relates to the government`s ability to create systems, principles and processes to such an extent that even when there is no interaction from the state there is compliance with the set systems. In amplification of this point, Bevir (2009, p.3) further demonstrates that governance has to do with the construction of social orders, social co-ordination and social practices. This was emphasised by Adams (2004, p.43) when he underlines that public meetings can complement structures that foster deliberation where citizens are provided an opportunity to engage in the political process before the deliberations commence, and after citizens have developed a set of recommendations or a consensus policy position.

According to the Legislative Sector Public Participation Document (2013, p.8), civil society includes a wide array of non-governmental and non-profit organisations, community groups, charitable organisations, labour unions, indigenous groups, faith-based organisations, professional associations and foundations. The civil society was noted to have a presence in public life; expressing the interests and values of their members or others based on ethical, cultural, political, scientific, religious or philanthropic considerations. This role of the civic organisations was confirmed by Reddy (1996, p.5) who displayed the importance of involving the rate-payers associations, vigilante groups and other social/political associations in small and large communities towards participation in public meetings.

Pierre (2006, p.13) asserts that in the advanced countries, governance is used by some of the alternative policy bodies and NGOs acting in the developing world, who see a new potential

for organisations through civil society. The policy bodies have also grown to distrust the state because they see it as captured by commercial interests, corrupt politicians and unaccountable bureaucracies. The author mentioned that the World Bank has been a leading advocate of promoting good governance. He further emphasised that good governance is subjected to the state`s ability to accomplish the desired scope of action. Pierre (2006, p.192) had observed the important ways that NGOs have created authority for themselves and thereby served as a check on the activities of states as well as on each other. Abelson *et al*. (2003, p.28) emphasised the importance of buy-in at the community level, especially by civic leaders, to mobilise citizen deliberation. Hughes (2006, p.70) asserts that democracy requires a vibrant civil society, one that can play a watchdog role on government and interest groups and provide alternative forms of political participation.

Agere (2000, p.2) has seen governance as a concept that goes beyond the issue of public management to the more fundamental question of how, in a modern society, democracy can be adapted to help countries resolve the problems they face. The author further asserts that the concept of governance has different implications for stakeholders such as the state, civil society and public administration institutions. The institutions of public administration, for example, would identify their role within the parameters of a dynamic society. However, it appears that the primary focus for such institutions is to include key relationships and systems of decision making and accountability (Agere, 2000, p.2). As training institutions, they are interested not only in the effectiveness of such institutions, but also in their integrity and the types of values that they embody. They would ensure that the government maintains the public service in a good state and hands it over, undamaged, to its successor at the end of the term (Agere, 2000, p.2).

In defining governance, Agere (2000, p.5) therefore concludes that it is the management of a nation's affairs which is associated with the highest state of development. The author advised that within a good democratic government people should be free to participate in decision-making processes, to ensure that there is efficiency in service rendered, respect human rights, have transparent government which is accountable and productive. Hughes (2006, p.70) emphasised the importance of functioning institutions within a democracy. The author further emphasises that democracy requires a legislature that represents the people, not one controlled by the president, prime minister, bureaucrats or the military. It requires an independent judiciary that enforces the rule of law with equal concern for all the people. Agere (2000, p.15) advised of an interface for examining parliament-executive relations in the context of contemporary governance issues and challenges; to assess the overall impact of parliament on the executive and make recommendations on strengthening its capacity to continue to perform its role.

2.6 Theoretical framework

This section focused on the theories that the researcher has found relevant for the current study. Creswell (2014, p.4) stated that, in qualitative research, the use of theory may often serve as a lens for the inquiry. In line with his observation, the theoretical framework section covered the models by different authors that helped in explaining the reasons why individuals behave the way they do when it comes to public participation and what the factors are that shape an individual`s perceptions. In addition, it explored the theory that builds understandings of the process of citizens' mobilisation and citizens' willingness to participate in government affairs. The details in the following sections also briefly position the study`s applied objectives in relation to the theory.

2.6.1 The shapers of perception

This theory was chosen by the researcher on the basis that it helped in explaining the reasons why individuals behave the way they do in their response to public participation and what the factors are that shape an individual`s perceptions. Perception has been viewed by Rao (2008) as a process by which individuals give meaning to their environment through organisation and interpretation of their sensory perceptions. The surrounding field and conditions within the individual are the physical stimuli that form the basis for individual perception. Rao (2008) asserts that perception is shaped and distorted by a number factors i.e. attitudes, motives, interests, experience and expectations. Perception is affected by a number of personal characteristics inclusive of a person`s attitudes, personality, motives, interest, past experiences and expectations.

This relates to what McComas (2003, p.171) asserts that, in particular, past attendance or communication about public meetings may form the basis of the citizen expectation. Even if citizens have never attended a public meeting, they may know someone who has or have heard or read about them from friends, neighbours, or in the mass media. These previous experiences, personal or vicarious, may result in individuals' forming expectations of public meetings. Citizens with high expectations may also tend to express more satisfaction with public meetings; if expectations are low, citizens will arguably express less satisfaction for public meetings (McComas, 2003, p.171). Rao (2008) also concludes that satisfaction about public meetings might be influenced by the citizens' perceptions about the nature of communication at public meetings. In this manner, when citizens perceive that the communication at public meetings has been both informative and participatory (referred to as

relational/informational) as opposed to restrictive or unidirectional, this might lead to citizens satisfaction with public meetings (Rao, 2008).

Hughes (2006, p.70) asserts the benefits of participating in politics for human development because part of being fully human is the ability to participate in the decisions that shape your life. People have a responsibility to exercise choice and control over their own destinies. This is a fundamental human right. Pierre (2006, p.150) saw new patterns of governance to stimulate learning processes that will lead to co-operative behaviour and mutual adjustment so that responsibility for managing structural changes is shared by all or most involved actors.

Cogan (1992, pp.91-102) identified different types of meeting participants. This typology is worth noting for those responsible for the administration of public meetings to understand their target audience, as some of these personalities might influence the perceptions citizens have of public meetings in general. The researcher therefore lists these types of participants to showcase the different types of meeting participants and audience that one can encounter when convening a public meeting. One can infer that the personalities might be linked to how they view public meetings. A future study might investigate the linkage between these various personalities and the response towards public participation (Cogan, 1992, pp.91-102). These types of meeting participants are:

- Accusers: “I have been listening to you for twenty minutes now and it’s the same stuff you bureaucrats always say. You don’t want to hear from citizens. You will just go and do what you want anyway”. These type of meeting participants, were described as being accusers, and are also often arguers.
- Apathetics: “I am not really interested in being here.” My spouse or boss or neighbour nagged me, so I tagged along. Disgruntled apathetics do not have to say anything to reveal their feelings.
- Apple-polishers: This personality had been described as “some folks have not changed since grade school. Back then, they were always trying to be the teacher`s pet by giving the answer they thought was expected or jumping up to do favours. In the adult world, they still try hard to please the person in authority.
- Arguers: This type of personality, if allowed to continue unchecked, will make it clear that they value their right to state their point of view more than they want to hear from anyone else.
- Attackers: This kind of personality was referred to as mentally or physically abusive bullies that may target the chair, a presenter or even someone in the audience.

- Bashfuls: Truly bashful people were described as people who have little self-confidence and do not believe that they have anything to contribute; thus, they rarely volunteer their opinions.
- Chip-on-the-shoulders: People with a chip on their shoulder are habitually resentful and angry, daring everyone to insult or injure them wherever they go, not only in the meeting.
- Dominators: There are two kinds of dominator: those who know nothing and just want to boss other people around and others who know too much and are impatient with any deliberative process.
- Doubters: “I don’t see how this can work. It never has before”. Doubters are incurable sceptics, they cannot bring themselves to believe that anything good can happen that they did not personally observe or invent.
- Dropouts: Slumping in their seats in the back of the room or off to the side, dropouts yawn, doodle, look out the window or conspicuously do something entirely irrelevant to the subject of the meeting.
- Eager beavers: This personality has been described as people who are so anxious to be liked and to be part of the group that they seize on any or all ideas without giving them much thought.
- Fence-sitters: Like eager beavers, fence sitters have few opinions of their own. They are reluctant to say anything, however, until they see what the majority or the people with the most status or influence are going.
- Gossip-spreaders: Gossip spreaders enjoy the attention that they receive when they disrupt meetings with hearsay that has little or no basis in fact.
- Hair splitters: This kind of personality is portrayed by people who are usually accountants, attorneys, scientists or computer wizards who are well paid on the job to dissect data; hair splitters do not understand that the same positive attributes that serve them well in their professions can discourage free flowing public discussion; however they are described as not utilising the same attributes to enhance public participation.
- Jump ups: This personality is portrayed by excitable, enthusiastic, high energy cheer leaders who are more interested in style than substance and have no patience with deliberate thinkers.
- Know it alls: “I have lived in this town since before many of you were born and let me tell you those new ideas will never work”.

- Laggards: The author noted that whereas dropouts generally find a seat quietly in the back, laggards amble in late and move to the front visibly and often audibly stepping over and around anyone in their way.
- Sneak-outers: This personality is portrayed by people who come on time but rudely disrupt the continuity or momentum of a meeting by leaving abruptly, usually without an explanation showing they may really have an emergency.
- Stand patters: This is the personality that has been described as people one should not waste time trying to confuse them with the facts, as they seem to have their own stubborn opinions and will not budge.
- Single issuers: This personality was described as people who come to all meetings with the same point of view regardless of the agenda.
- Talkers: Many meetings are attended by someone who pontificates too much, making their arguments too loudly and too long.
- Walkers: Sometimes people pace at length. If these walkers leave the meeting at an inappropriate time, they become walkers.
- Groupies: The behaviour of groups, as well as individuals, can present a challenge to leaders of a meeting.

2.6.2 Theory of reasoned action and planned behaviour

This theory was chosen on the basis that it believed that people are responsible for their own actions and behaviour and the way they react to situations. It is on this basis that the researcher believed that citizens are responsible for the way they react and respond towards participating in public meetings. Their response and reaction also influence their perceptions towards public meetings. The theory of reasoned action and planned behaviour was developed by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), who indicated that reasoned action predicts behavioural intention, a compromise between stopping at attitude predictions and actually predicting behaviour. Reasoned action states that attitudes, together with subjective norms, determine behavioural intent (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980).

The theory of planned behaviour is a theory which predicts deliberate behaviour. This therefore suggests that a person`s behaviour is determined by his/her intention to perform the behaviour and that this intention is in turn, a function of his/her attitude toward behaviour and his/her subjective norm. Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) say that perceived behavioural control refers to people`s perceptions of their ability to perform a given behaviour. In the words of Morris *et al.* (2012), the theory of planned behaviour is one of a closely inter-related family of theories which adopt a cognitive approach to explaining behaviour which centres on an

individual's attitudes and beliefs. Intention is, itself, an outcome of the combination of attitudes towards behaviour.

2.6.3 Theory on citizen participation

This is the theory that builds understandings of the process of citizens' mobilisation and citizens' willingness to participate in government affairs. Roberts (2003) highlighted two theories for citizen participation, which are indirect citizen participation or representative democracy and direct citizen participation. For the purpose of this study, the focus is on direct citizen participation theory as the study aimed to understand the perceptions of citizens towards the democratic process of public participation. According to Mostert (2003), the theory of direct democracy offered a different approach to democracy. Democracy in this theory is much more than regular elections. It implies the active, direct participation of individual citizens in government. Direct participation would give the public more control over public affairs and would counterbalance the power of government bureaucracies and sectoral interest groups (Mostert, 2003). This theory has been supported due to its favour to the power it give the public to be involved in decision-making. Increased decentralisation is often suggested as a way to bring government closer to the people and to facilitate direct participation (Roberts, 2003).

Wengert (1976) presented the theory of representation wherein emphasis is placed on the representivity of the citizens within a meeting. The representation of citizens at public meetings is crucial as decisions that impact their environment are taken; it is therefore imperative for citizens to be representing themselves at public meetings for their voices to be heard by the local authorities. Franklin and Ebdon (2002) recognise that in order to obtain meaningful citizen participation, one needs to consider factors such as the structure of the city, the types of participants, the mechanisms used to foster participation and the process.

Callahan (2007, p.145) emphasised that an obvious tension exists between the public`s desire for greater involvement in the decision-making process and the prerogative of the public administrators to exclude them from the process. Those who favour direct participation argue that it promotes democracy, builds trust, ensures accountability, reduces conflict, and advances fairness (Callahan, 2007, p.146). Those who argue against it say direct participation is unrealistic, time consuming, costly, disruptive and politically naïve. They also argue that citizens lack the knowledge and expertise to be meaningfully involved and that they are motivated by their own personal interests rather than the public good. A brief overview of the language reform shows how legislation introduced in the 1960`s and 1970`s advanced the notion of maximum feasible participation and adequate opportunity for citizen participation (Callahan, 2007). As a result, citizen participation, which is typically confrontational and

controlled by the administration, is compared to collaborative governance where citizens meaningfully engage in dialogue and have the opportunity to influence the process of deliberation as well as the outcome (Callahan, 2007).

The author further indicated that on one side of the debate are those who believe that citizens should have a direct and active role in the decisions of the state to ensure that government entities do what is right, perform as expected and act in the best interest of the public. On the other side of the debate are those in favour and who support representative democracy and indirect participation. Citizens elect representatives to act on their behalf and trust professional administrators to fairly and efficiently implement public policy (Callahan, 2007).

One of the biggest questions surrounding citizen participation in government decision-making is determining how much participation is enough. Some theories argue in favour of direct and deliberative models of collaboration, while others favour indirect involvement. Direct democracy suggests that citizens are the owners of government and should therefore be involved in the decisions of the state (Callahan, 2007, p.154).

Direct participation is idealistic. People are either too passive or apathetic. According to advocates, indirect participation has its benefits. Due to the citizens' lack of time, knowledge and personal motivation to participate, they cannot be expected to be responsible for every public sector decision (Callahan, 2007). Direct participation is not realistic, given the size and complexity of the public sector. The requirement for citizens to possess a certain level of expertise that many do not possess and a time commitment the average citizen is not willing to make are necessary for the technical, political and administrative skills needed to efficiently manage in a global environment (Callahan, 2007).

Irvin and Stansbury (2004) assert that the success or failure of participation is impacted by social and economic costs which make it undesirable of certain place based characteristics of direct participation inclusive of community size, wealth and homogeneity. Their research shows that ideal conditions for effective participation exist in some communities but note that the broad and shallow interests of citizens will always be overruled by the narrow and deep interests of organised groups (Irvin and Stanbury, 2004).

Those who favour direct democracy believe the more one participates, and the more arenas in which one participates, the more capable and involved a person is likely to become (Irvin & Stanbury, 2004). Beyond its educative and empowering role, direct democracy promotes a sense of community and common bonds that transcend individual interest. Advocates of direct participation believe that citizens have the knowledge and expertise necessary to meaningfully participate in public sector decisions that affect them and that an involved and engaged

community makes direct democracy and participatory decision-making possible (Irvin & Stanbury, 2004). All too often we hear stories of programmes and policies that fail because public managers neglected to ask the public what they thought would work or was in the best interest of the community (Callahan, 2007). Participatory theorists argue that direct citizen participation not only leads to better decision-making but also facilitates social stability by developing a sense of community, increasing collective decision-making and promoting acceptance and respect of the governance process (Irvin and Stanbury, 2004).

2.6.4 Civic voluntarism model

The researcher has chosen this type of model to demonstrate the willingness of citizens to participate without being pressured to do so. The model of civic voluntarism illustrates that the willingness of citizens to participate and become active in politics, requires a certain level of motivation (Rubenson, 2000). Citizens also need the capacity to be active so that they must be able to participate. Individuals who are both motivated and capable of participation are more likely to become active if they are part of recruitment networks where requests for participation take place. Rubenson (2000) claims that non-political settings possess both motivation, and capacity for citizen's active involvement in politics. These traits are developed by individuals early in life, such as in the family and in school. In adult life, the job and non-political voluntary organisations, including the church, are some of the organisations that are well positioned to confer opportunities for developing 'politically relevant resources' and these institutions also contribute to feelings of psychological engagement with politics (Rubenson, 2000). The direction of causality in the model goes from involvement in non-political institutions to political activity. Reddy (1996, p.4) puts emphasis on consultation when he indicates that the government required consent from citizens for it to be effective.

Reddy (1996, p. 4) asserts that the ability of the man to control and determine his affairs better manifest the dignity of a man. He further emphasised that full individual participation within the local government context contributes to the creation of community solidarity because citizens feel involved in matters relevant to their welfare. He viewed full participation as a process whereby citizens are invited and expected to express their wishes on issues of governance.

2.6.5. The COJ governance model

Although there are both structures and processes in place to ensure public participation in legislative processes in the COJ, it is clear that there are many gaps between how systems

are intended to work and how they actually operate in practice (Legislative Sector Public Participation Document Support Report, 2013, p.37). A gap was identified by the Legislative Sector Public Participation Document Support Report (2013, p.37) wherein it was stated that there was no consistency and a lack of co-ordination of activities between national and provincial public participation practices and this led to identification of a need to integrate these practices and align them. In this sense, much of public participation practice in South Africa remains an aspiration.

The National Public Participation Framework (2007, p.5) developed by the Department of Provincial and Local Government seeks to provide a guideline that contains integrated opportunities and minimum requirements for public participation in order to improve alignment and the practice of public participation which is also applicable to the local sphere. This public participation document provides a policy framework for public participation in South Africa. This builds on the commitment of the democratic government to deepen democracy, which is embedded in the Constitution, and above all in the concept of local government, as comprising the community as part of the municipality.

Finally, Kosecik and Sagbas (2004) found that there is a relationship between citizens' attitude toward local government and levels of participation in local government affairs. In addition, Dahlgren (2009) argued that despite all the warnings to participate, citizens themselves may have many good reasons to abstain from participation. Hence, this study interacted with the citizens themselves to identify their perceptions on public participation and factors influencing those perceptions.

The DPLG (2007) noted the commitment of government to a form of participation which is genuinely empowering, and not tokenistic consultation or manipulation. This involves a range of activities, including creating democratic representative structures (ward committees), assisting those structures to plan at a local level as well as implementing and monitoring those plans using a range of working groups and Community-Based Organisations (CBOs). The COJ has these structures in place, although there are still shortcomings with the implementation of effective public participation and hence, this study explored obstacles hindering citizens' effective participation.

According to the COJ IDP (2015), the governance model recognises two separate sets of functions as embodied in the executive and legislative, however, it must be recognised that this does not unfold smoothly in some cases. The legislative function is the political management which is made up of councillors being elected and proportional representatives

chosen every five years during the local government elections (COJ IDP, 2015). The council is responsible for the oversight role on the formulation of policy and its implementation. Its key role in its current structure is to focus on legislative, participatory and oversight roles. The vision and mission of the council becomes a reality through the delivery of services envisioned by the politicians which is under the municipal administration headed by the city manager supported by an executive management team (COJ IDP, 2015). The council is responsible for the approval of programmes due for implementation, this is done through the employment of staff hired by the city manager. The Mayor and the executives associated with the office oversee the work of the city manager and department heads (COJ IDP, 2015).

The legislative arm of the council is headed by the speaker of the council who presides over council meetings. The co-ordination, management functions and development of section 79 committees and councillor affairs are the speaker`s responsibility. Furthermore, the speaker fulfils the role of building democracy and managing community participation in local government, particularly by ensuring that the ward committees function effectively. It is also the responsibility of the speaker to ensure there is public consultation, involvement and participation in the affairs of the city. The executive governance, made up of the executive mayor, assisted by the mayoral committee, must report on community involvement and ensure that due regard is given to public views during consultations (COJ IDP plan, 2015).

The legal and judicial framework refers to a pro-governance, pro-development legal and judicial system in which laws are clear and uniformly applied through an objective and independent judiciary. It is also one in which the legal system provides the necessary sanctions to deter or penalise any breach. It promotes rule of law, human rights and private capital flows. In its absence or when it is weak, private capital flows may be discouraged, transaction costs are distorted and rent seeking activities become rampant. Enforcement involves firm action against corrupt behaviour at all levels (COJ IDP plan, 2015).

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter provided an insight on what other scholars have written with regard to public participation. The literature reviewed also engaged the factors that citizens consider as obstacles for public participation in public meetings. This chapter helped the researcher to develop the research methodology for the study. The literature reviewed was categorised and divided into three themes: accountability theme, management theme and governance theme. As a result, the factors that hinder public participation in public meetings were reviewed according to the three identified themes. This chapter also covered the models by different authors that helped in explaining the reasons why individuals behave the way they do when it

comes to public participation and what the factors are that shape an individual`s perceptions. In addition, it explored the theory that builds understanding of the process of citizens' mobilisation and citizens' willingness to participate in government affairs.

From the literature, it is evident that the government of South Africa has processes in place to help ensure that there will be effective public participation. In this context, the citizens are expected to be willing to engage and avail themselves through participation for the improvement of service delivery. However, these ideals do not always materialise and the study explored the reasons, both from the side of decision-makers and the citizens. The study assessed if deficits in participation levels within the case study of the COJ are rooted in the attitudes of the citizens, in the lack of effective and efficient administration, or in any other set of reasons. The findings add to prevailing theoretical insights and also give direction on how to maximise participation in public meetings within the COJ in future. The study stressed that effective public participation needs to be viewed as a two-way relationship between the government and its citizens, a relationship which must be nurtured for improvement of service delivery.

3 CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methods utilised when collecting and analysing the data in the current research project. Mills and Birks (2014, p.32) described methodology as the lens used by the researcher when deciding the type of method they will use to answer the research questions and how best they will utilise these methods. In methodology, a decision is undertaken by the researcher on the methods which will solicit, most effectively, the participants' responses to the operationalised research questions. In this instance, the responses concerned the perceptions participants have towards public meetings, as well as the factors hindering public participation in public meetings as obtained from citizens, government actors and documentation.

3.2 Research strategy

Bryman (2012, p.35) indicated that the research strategy is an orientation of how the social research will be conducted using different strategies. The strategy used in this research was qualitative research which Bryman (2012, p.35), Wagner (2012, p.10) and Creswell (2014, p.4) described as the strategy that places an emphasis on words rather than numbers; the latter are associated with quantitative studies. Yin (2011, p.7), Wagner (2012, p.10) and Creswell (2014, p.4) point out that qualitative research, in contrast, suggests the kind of research design that represents the views and perspectives of people. Mixed methodology as per Wagner (2012, p.10) and Creswell (2014, p.4) is a combination of qualitative and quantitative research approaches in one study.

The current study is explanatory in nature, which had been defined by Wagner (2012, p.8) as most typically done when there is adequate knowledge about a topic. This is done to look for the reasons and causes of an occurrence. Much has been written about public participation. However, there is a need to further engage on the reasons stated by citizens as hindrances towards public participation with particular reference to the South African context and in the COJ. The epistemological approach employed was that of interpretivism where the emphasis is on understanding the social world by analysing what people interpret about their environment. The ontological position of qualitative research strategy was constructionism, which implies the understanding of the social world by analysing what people interpret about their environment rather than external influences or the social world's physical construction (Bryman, 2012), Creswell (2014, p.7) and Wagner (2012, p.58). This study agreed with this

approach as it appears that citizens have perceptions about public meetings and hence it is imperative for the study to engage them on finding out what the factors are they consider as obstacles to participation in public meetings. According to Creswell (2014, p.8), social constructivists believe that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work and because these meanings are varied. The researcher therefore has to consider the complexity of views, rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas.

3.3 Research approach

The research adopted a qualitative approach which Mills and Birks (2014, p.37) described as being driven by the question a research project has to answer. The research project`s main question is: What are the factors that hinder public participation in public meetings within the COJ? What is the role that the COJ`s governance, accountability and management processes plays in ensuring that citizens participate in public meetings? The study contributes to what is known on the citizens' views about public meetings although other similar studies were conducted in other parts of the world, Mothusi (2010) and Chirwa (2014). The comparative studies helped this study to focus on the relevant dimensions of the COJ. Creswell (2014, p.4) defined qualitative research as an approach that explores and understands meaning ascribed by individuals or groups to a social or human problem. Other research in the same field as this current study which utilised the qualitative approach included the work done by Leighter *et al.* (2009) in their study to explore the practice of public meetings.

Wagner *et al.* (2012, p.10) defined qualitative research methodology as a research design that collects information in the form of words. One might add here phrases, expressions, experiences and observations. Typically, it is used for exploring, describing, identifying or explaining social phenomena. Yin (2011, p.7) viewed qualitative research as the kind of approach that represents the views and perspectives of people. The research in this study intends to explain in more detail the perceptions and views of the citizens within the COJ with regard to public meetings, and find out what informs those views. The qualitative approach was identified to be suitable for the current study as it exposed the citizens to an opportunity to express their views and opinions on the factors they consider as obstacles for public participation in public meetings. This approach therefore assisted the researcher to collect information from the citizens' point of view. The citizens were also afforded an opportunity to share their own experiences with regard to public participation in the COJ and the public meetings they had previously attended.

Recommendations were made by McComas (2003, p.179) through whom a direction was given for future researchers to utilise a qualitative examination of influences on citizen satisfaction with public meetings, such as via focus groups or open-ended questions related in in-depth interviews. McComas *et al.* (2006) re-emphasised that although other work using similar survey methods generated much higher response rates among both attendees and non-attendees of public meetings about local health risks, future research should consider additional incentives or alternative approaches to obtain higher response rates. Besley *et al.* (2012) remained open to the possibility that future research, particularly qualitative research, might be helpful in exploring the need for a more nuanced measure of how people view public meetings or, indeed, any form of engagement. As noted in the literature review, while substantial research has focused on explaining why people participate, little research has investigated the question of what people think about engagement. This gap represents both a theoretical failing and a practical barrier to those seeking to implement engagement.

Wagner *et al.* (2012, p.8) and Bryman (2012, p.6) viewed qualitative research as the kind of research done when a researcher seeks to understand the world as it is experienced by others. The ontological assumption of the study as defined by Wagner *et al.* (2012) and Bryman (2012, pp.6; 32) is that reality is based on how an individual constructs meaning; whereas the epistemological assumption is that the truth lies within the human experiences. Neuman (2014) explained that, in the interpretative paradigm, the researcher views the world through the eyes of the participants. This world view is therefore socially constructed by what people see and experience in the social world. In this vein, the researcher wished to learn from the citizens how they account for their response towards public meetings, what the factors are that contribute to their perceptions and views about public meetings, and how to participate effectively in local government affairs as a citizen.

3.4 Research design

Research design has been portrayed by Wagner *et al. (*2012, p.21) as an architectural blue-print that is followed in the construction of a building which specifies, for example, what material will be needed, how much of it will need to be purchased and what the layout of the building is. In the same vein, Creswell (2014, p.14) defined case studies as a design of enquiry in which the researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a case; programme; event; process; activity of one or more individuals. This was also emphasised by Kumar (2014, p.122) who referred to a research design as the road map that a researcher decides to follow during the research to find answers to the research questions which are valid, objective, accurate and

economic. The research design gives direction to the research project and serves as a compass to show the researcher which direction to follow in executing the project.

The study adopted a case study research design. This design type has been described by Bryman (2012, p.12) and Babbie (2014, p.302) as commonly used with the term ‘case’ which makes it associated with a location such as a community or organisation and the emphasis is placed on examining the setting of the case. The case research design was suitable for the study as the research was conducted in specific areas of the COJ, in particular, Regions E and F. As indicated earlier for the purpose of this research, the researcher needed to do an in-depth study where a decision was made to focus on a smaller geographical area, and do an in-depth analysis of this area.

The motivation to choose the COJ as the location for the case study stems from the background that the then Executive Mayor of the COJ had launched the outreach programme in August 2011, with the intention to produce a local government strategy that would focus on understanding the experiences of Gauteng people as well as addressing their opinions and needs. The Growth and Development Strategy (GDS) outreach also aims to ensure a holistic approach to public participation with regard to a developmental local government strategy for all (COJ 2040 GDS strategy, 2011). Despite this programme, tentative evidence suggests that the COJ is struggling with ensuring full participation of citizens in public meetings. This was evident through the identified gap between this initiative and the deficient uptake of participatory options by COJ citizens. This study explored the reasons why the gap exists, and studied this in the context of particular areas in the COJ. The researcher utilised semi-structured interviews, focus groups and document analysis as methods of collecting data.

3.5. Sampling and recruitment

3.5.1. Sampling process for the semi structured interviews

The research purposively sampled 10 participants with the aim to conduct semi-structured and in-depth interviews with those who are responsible for creating the participatory platforms. The choice of purposive sampling assisted the researcher in determining the obstacles hindering the citizens within the COJ to participate in public meetings. Hence it was imperative to interview those who are responsible for creating participatory platforms, besides interviewing relevant citizens. This set of participants were sampled purposively as follows: one ward governance administrator; two ward councillors; one ward committee member; one community development worker; the COJ Regional Manager: Ward Governance; the COJ Citizen Relationship Regional Director; one governance committee representative; and one

proportional representation (PR) councillor for the relevant geographical areas (see Table 2.1). For the purpose of this research, the researcher needed to do an in-depth study where a decision to focus on a smaller geographical area was therefore considered; as a result, this research did not focus on the entire City of Johannesburg. In this instance, the participants were also chosen from a limited geographical area, in particular, Regions E and F. Some of the interview participants are located in Region E and F in terms of their working conditions, however they reside in other regions within the COJ. Their perceptions of the factors that citizens consider as obstacles for public participation in public meetings was not related specifically to the physical location where they are working currently, but their perception about the COJ public participation processes in general, as they had experienced it in their daily lives as the COJ citizens. Upon conducting interviews, it was found out that the petition and public participation representative could not form part of the sample as they had not been involved in public meetings.

Payne and Payne (2004) defined sampling generally as a process of selecting sub-sets of people or social phenomena to be studied from the larger universe to which they belong. Non-probability sampling was suitable for the current study. It is defined by Wagner *et al.* (2012, p.88) as the process whereby some units in the population are more likely to be selected than others. Neuman (2014, p.247) elaborates that in qualitative research we use sampling by selecting only a few pertinent cases to provide clarity, insight and understanding about issues in the social world.

The types of non-probability sampling identified are (a) convenience, which has been described by Babbie (2014) as entailing stopping people on the street to participate on the research using whoever is available; (b) snowball, described by Babbie (2014, p.188) as entailing people who are interviewed and then asking them to suggest other participants; (c) quota, which Babbie (2014, p.188) denotes as entailing selection of the sample based on prescribed characteristics for the participants; and (d) purposive sampling which, according to Neuman (2014, p.273) and Babbie (2014, p.187) is appropriate when one selects respondents that are informative.

This research utilised purposive sampling in implementing the in-depth qualitative interviews. Bryman (2012, p.418) and Babbie (2014) define purposive sampling as the process wherein participants who are relevant to the research questions focusing on the goals of the research are chosen purposefully by the researcher. Kumar (2014, p.244) advised that when there is a decree as to who can provide the best information to achieve the objectives of the research the researcher can consider purposive sampling. The researcher can use his/her discretion on the likely participants to have information and be willing to share this with the researcher

and can only go to those people. McComas (2003) in her study to determine citizen satisfaction with public meetings, had sampled two neighbouring communities focusing on those who did and the ones who did not attend any public meetings. Blair (2000) in his study of public meetings, purposefully sampled six countries to illustrate the two themes of participation and accountability within the local government. The methodologies of these studies thus helped to guide the current project.

Table 2.1: Summary of respondents (semi-structured interviews): municipal functionaries who are citizens within the COJ

Respondents	Occupation	Reasons for being targeted
Ms A; Mr I	Ward committee member; Community development worker.	To understand accountability of the COJ towards public participation in public meetings from a grassroots level perspective.
Ms B; D & C	COJ governance committee representative; Regional Director; Regional Manager: Ward governance.	To understand the governance process of the COJ towards public participation in public meetings.
Ms E; Mr G & Mr F; Mr H	Ward administrator; Ward councillors; PR councillors.	To understand the management process of the COJ towards public participation in public meetings.

3.5.2. Recruitment process for focus groups

At the same time, 16 participants who are community members within the COJ, and reside within the selected geographical areas, in particular, Regions E and F, were recruited to form part of two focus groups of eight participants each. The community members were inclusive of civil society organisations, and the focus was on both citizens who attend and those who do not attend public meetings. The main objectives of engaging in the research context with the selected participants were to obtain in-depth understandings of the perceptions of citizens towards public meetings, and to ascertain the factors underlying those perceptions. In addition, this part of the research, being the focus groups, focused on these citizens' experiences and observations on how public participation processes are managed in the COJ and the obstacles hindering effective participation.

Table 2.2: Summary of participants (focus group number 1) with municipal elites and citizens within the COJ

Participants	Occupation	Reasons for being targeted

Participant 1	PR councillor	• To understand accountability of the COJ towards public participation in public meetings from a grassroots level perspective. • To understand the governance process of the COJ towards public participation in public meetings. • To understand the management process of the COJ towards public participation in public meetings.
Participant 2	Ward councillor	
Participant 3	Ward committee member	
Participant 4	Ward committee member	
Participant 5	Business forum representative	
Participant 6	NGO representative	
Participant 7	Community member	
Participant 8	Community member	

Table 2.3: Summary of participants (focus group number 2) with municipal elites and citizens within the COJ

Participants	Occupation	Reasons for being targeted
Participant 1	Ward committee member	• To understand accountability of the COJ towards public participation in public meetings from a grassroots level perspective. • To understand the governance process of the COJ towards public participation in public meetings. • To understand the management process of the COJ towards public participation in public meetings.
Participant 2	Ward committee member	
Participant 3	Business forum member	
Participant 4	Business forum member	
Participant 5	Community liaison officer	
Participant 6	Community liaison officer	
Participant 7	Community member	
Participant 8	Community member	
Participant 9	PR Councillor	

3.6 Data collection

In collecting data about public participation, researchers have used a wide range of methods. These comparative insights help direct and position the current CoJ case study. Adams (2004) expressed his opinion about surveys for their inability to allow for either deliberation or citizens expressing their voices. In his study on public meetings and the democratic process, he had used semi-structured interviews. Besley *et al.* (2012) utilised a survey to determine citizens' views about public meetings in a study conducted in the USA; qualitative and descriptive approaches were followed and a 7-point Likert type style was adopted to help assess citizen perceptions. McComas *et al.* (2006) utilised a quantitative approach in their study to understand why people do or do not participate in public meetings wherein mailed questionnaires to 500 random sampled participants were utilised.

Besley *et al.* (2012) utilised mail surveys as a data collection method when they researched public participation. They also used 500 individuals in a setting of probability sampling. McComas (2003) in her study to determine citizen satisfaction with public meetings that were convened for risk communication, utilised a questionnaire which was distributed to two neighbouring communities and on specific interview items, a 7-point Likert scale was utilised to determine the level of citizen satisfaction with public meetings. Blair (2000) utilised different methods, collecting data in the form of key informant interviews, document reviews, and field visits to sample the local government units in the six countries he purposefully sampled to study participation and accountability themes. Leighter *et al. (*2009) utilised audio visual methods to record the meeting in their research on the practices of public meetings. Although Llewellyn (2005) in her study utilised recordings to explore audience participation in local public meetings, this study utilised interviews as the technique to collect data. The data collection has been described by Wisker (2008) as the process which gives the researcher an opportunity to meet the subjects of their research wherein the detailed information he/she sets out to collect is provided. This includes information based on sensitive issues; emotions, feelings, observations and experiences.

Merriam (2009, p.109) advised that tape recording the interview is one of the best ways to record the interview data. She further asserts that the recording practice ensures that everything said by the participants is preserved for analysis. In the current study, the researcher utilised voice recorders to record all the conversations held with the participants with the consent of the participants and transcribed the conversations after the interviews to get the response from the participants on the factors that they considered as obstacles for citizens participating in public meetings in the COJ.

This study therefore collected data utilising three techniques, namely, semi-structured interviews, focus groups and documentary analysis.

3.6.1 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were utilised in the study as the method gives space for the participants to answer questions in their own way and words and the researcher can divert from the arranged questions to ask new questions that require clarification from the participants (Hall & Hall, 1996; Payne & Payne, 2004; Bryman, 2004; Bryman, 2012; Babbie, 2014).

Interviews have been viewed by Wagner *et al.* (2012, p.133) and Babbie (2014, p.311) as relevant to qualitative studies as much of the data collected and used in qualitative studies is

generated from interviewing. For purposes of conducting the interviews in the current study, it is useful to bear in mind that an interview is a two-way conversation and a purposive interaction in which the interviewer asks the participant questions in order to collect data about her/his ideas, experiences, belief, views, opinions and behaviours. The aim is to obtain rich descriptive data that will help us to see the world through the eyes of the participant (Babbie, 2014, p.312). The researcher interviewed identified citizens within the COJ with the intention of understanding their views about and actions regarding public meetings. Public participation was thus explored through the eyes of the decision maker-participants as they experience it in their daily lives.

3.6.2 Focus group discussions

The research in the second instance collected data through the utilisation of two focus groups with the citizens within certain geographical areas in the COJ, in particular, Regions E and F. Preference was given to the community members with influence in an area or experience of community issues and municipal service delivery. Wagner (2012, p.135) defined focus groups as a method where a discussion is focused on a particular topic, getting the participation of carefully recruited individuals, guided by a facilitator, using a well-developed discussion guide, where the participants feel free to express their views and debate with one another. This research process allowed participants to build on one another`s ideas and comments. Neuman (2014, p.471) described focus groups as a technique in which people are informally interviewed in a group discussion setting where topics such as public attitudes and personal behaviours are explored. Merriam (2009, p.93) sees focus groups as an interview on a topic with a group of people who have knowledge on the topic, and she asserts that the composition of the group depends on the topic to be discussed.

Merriam (2009, p.93) also advised that the focus groups work best for topics people could talk about to each other in their everyday lives, but do not. This relates to what Kumar (2014, p.156) asserts, namely, that the focus group is a form of strategy in a qualitative research in which attitudes, opinions and perceptions towards an issue, product, service or programme are explored through a free and open discussion between members of the group and the researcher. Kumar (2014, p.156) advises that the researcher selects a group of people who he/she think are best equipped to discuss what he/she wants to explore. The group could comprise individuals drawn from highly trained professionals or average residents of a community, depending upon the objectives of the focus group (Kumar, 2014). The focus group method is ideal for this study as it encourages discussions on the citizens' perceptions and experiences towards public meetings and public participation in the COJ. The recruitment of

the focus groups participants was based on the objective of the focus groups where the researcher aimed to obtain the perceptions of citizens about the factors that citizens consider as obstacles for participating in public meetings. The other factor that was considered by the researcher when recruiting participants of the focus group was her choice of selecting a group of people that she thought were better equipped to discuss what she wanted to explore. In this case, the researcher had selected participants who, in her opinion had knowledge of public meetings.

3.6.3 Document analysis

Wagner *et al.* (2012, p.141) described documents as social products as they serve as evidence for what is claimed to be. A review was conducted of existing documentation such as City of Johannesburg newsletters, council approved reports and general coverage of public participatory matters in current affairs magazines, newspapers and online news sources. In some instances, the literature`s attention to published research papers and journal articles supplemented the secondary data. Documentary analysis assisted in revealing other sources of data that were not known by the participants who participated in the study. Documentary analysis further assisted in availing other information relating to public participation that was not easily available in the public domain. The researcher in this instance had reviewed the documents which had been featured in the literature review namely: the public service commission study on public participation; the Municipal Systems Act No. 32 of 2000; the Constitution of Republic of South Africa; the COJ IDP strategy reviewed document 2015/16; the Legislative Sector Public Participation Framework Document; the National Public Participation Framework; and the COJ 2040`s growth and development strategy of 2011.

The documentary analysis helped the researcher to focus on the thematic analysis by outlining the three key concepts on which the study was focusing. The documentary analysis assisted in understanding the accountability of the COJ with regard to public participation, the management of public meetings and the processes utilised by the COJ to execute public participation in public meetings.

3.7 Data analysis

The literature review demonstrated the analysis of data conducted by other authors such as McComas (2003), where, in her study to determine the citizens' satisfaction with public meetings, she utilised a quantitative study and the data were analysed through descriptive statistics. Halverson (2003), when assessing the effects of public participation, utilised a quantitative study wherein data were analysed through descriptive statistics. Discussions

which lasted between 45 minutes to one hour were taped and transcribed. Liewellyn (2005), in his study to explore audience participation in public meetings, coded the responses of respondents by categorising them.

According to Wagner *et al.* (2012), qualitative studies gather data through strategies such as interviews and focus groups. These documents must be kept in their original form by leaving audiotapes, transcripts and documents unaltered, which also makes the data analysis process easier. This also enables the researcher to refer back to the original documents or other sources as needed, to verify accuracy and it provides an audit trail if one has been asked to substantiate the findings. For the purpose of the current study, the researcher utilised audiotapes to record data from the interviews and focus groups. The researcher had interviews with participants that lasted between 45 minutes and one hour. At the same time the focus groups were conducted with the participants which lasted for 1.5 hours.

The researcher in the current study used coding to analyse the data collected. Coding has been defined by Neuman (2014, p.480) and Babbie (2014, p.387) as the process of organising raw data into conceptual categories and creating themes or concepts. Payne and Payne (2004) referred to coding as the process of organising and conceptualising the detailed components of data into patterns by the use of symbols and labels to identify and interpret elements that will feature in the analysis. Mills and Birks (2014, p.43) referred to coding as the labeling of a data segment using a term that captures the researcher`s interpretation of its essential meaning.

Wagner *et al.* (2012, p.231) define thematic analysis as a general approach to analysing qualitative data that involves identifying themes or patterns in the data and this is useful when the researcher wants to understand some phenomenon by researching how various participants experience the phenomenon. This current research project analysed data by means of linking trends in the data themes to the themes that emerged from the literature and theory studies. The research sought to understand the factors that inform the views of citizens in the COJ (in the designated case study areas) with regard to public meetings. In the data analysis phase, the researcher derived meaning of the data collected from participants by categorising them into themes.

3.8 Validity and reliability

Validity refers to the extent to which the research instrument measures what it intends to measure (Bailey, 1994; Payne & Payne, 2004; Leedy & Ormrod, 2010; Babbie, 2014).

According to Neuman (2014, p.212), validity means truthfulness and authenticity which refers to offering a fair, honest and balanced account of social life from the viewpoint of the people who live it every day. From the viewpoint of Bryman (2004), validity is concerned with the integrity of the conclusions that are generated from a piece of research. Validity in this study was obtained through a construction of a good quality interview guide and discussion guide for the focus group that tapped into the citizens and officials/ decision maker's true perceptions of the participatory processes within the COJ. Validity was also obtained through emphasis on the ethical considerations where the participants in the study were assured that there is confidentiality and therefore emphasis was also placed on providing accurate information and answers. The reliability of the study refers to the dependability and consistency of the study when the results of the study are repeatable (Bryman, 2004; Payne & Payne, 2004; Leedy & Ormrod, 2010; Babbie, 2014; Neuman, 2014).

Validity and reliability was established as per the alternative criteria for qualitative research, by establishing the trustworthiness of the study (Bryman, 2012, p.47). To prove trustworthiness, four criteria needed to be met. The first was credibility, which is consistent with internal validity in quantitative strategy (Wagner *et al.,* 2012, p.138). It establishes whether the findings of the study are credible and whether the manner in which the researcher came to his/her findings is credible. There are two methods for establishing credibility, namely: member validation and triangulation (Bryman, 2012, pp.47, 390).

This study employed triangulation to establish credibility. This was done by interviewing the COJ actors, in this instance, the ward administrators who are responsible for the administration of public meetings and the policy implementers. The second criterion for trustworthiness is transferability which is consistent with external validity in quantitative strategy. This assisted in determining whether the findings could be transferred to another context. The provision of detailed description is called "thick description" Bryman (2012, pp.49, 390) and this is employed in the current study.

The third criterion is dependability and it is consistent with reliability in quantitative strategy (Bryman, 2012, pp.49, 392). To ensure dependability of the findings of this study, an audit trail was kept of all interview transcripts, interview schedules and other relevant documents and electronic files, which would enable any finding to be justified upon inquiry or peer review. The documentation is kept securely to preserve confidentiality agreements with the participants.

The fourth and final criterion for establishing trustworthiness is confirmability. This is consistent with objectivity. As the researcher is the main tool of research in qualitative research, it should be shown that the researcher has not affected the findings of the study by allowing his/her

biases to influence the research (Bryman, 2012, pp.49, 392). To accomplish this, all possible biases and relevant background details of the researcher are noted in this report.

3.9 Ethical considerations

3.9.1 Informed consent

Wagner *et al.* (2012, p.68) and Punch (2014) emphasised that after access to a setting, the collection of primary data is normally carried out with the explicit consent of participants, therefore it is important for the researcher to receive informed consent from the participants of the study of their willingness to participate in the study. Kumar (2014, p.285) asserts that informed consent implies that participants are made aware of the type of information required from them; why the information is being sought; what purpose it will be put to; how they are expected to participate in the study and how it will directly or indirectly affect them. Kumar (2014, p.285) further emphasised that it is important that the consent be voluntary and without pressure of any kind.

The researcher drafted an informed consent form for all the participants to sign prior to participation in the study. This allowed the researcher to reach an agreement with the participants to be included in the study of their own will. The researcher requested the participants for their time to voluntarily participate in the study and utilised consent forms to confirm the willingness to participate voluntarily in the study.

3.9.2 Anonymity and confidentiality

Wagner *et al.* (2012, p.70) and Babbie (2014, p.65) emphasised the importance of the researcher knowing the identity of the participants, but not being willing to disclose the information to anyone. As part of confidentiality, the researcher indicated to the participants that their identity would not be disclosed to anyone and they were informed on what procedures to follow if the ethics were not adhered to. The interview component of the study utilised some informants who were chosen purposefully by the researcher and were well known to her as they are fellow employees at the COJ. The participants were also assured prior to them signing the consent form that their identity would be anonymous and the information they share would not be linked explicitly to their names and positions, should they prefer such confidentiality. Where they consent, specific attribution may be used.

The citizen-participants were assured equally of the ethics and confidentiality of the research process, especially given that the researcher is an employee of the COJ. Babbie (2014, p.65)

emphasises the importance of the researcher to identify herself to the participants, and not disguise her identity. The researcher was open about her employment status, but also stressed that in this project she is a researcher and scholar foremost, and only secondarily, a COJ employee. She indicated her COJ employee status in advance and assured the participants that she would not be biased in any form. As part of the introduction form to the participants the researcher explained the purpose of the research to the participants. She also issued a statement on her unconditional adherence to all aspects of ethical research practice.

3.9.3 Voluntary participation

Babbie (2014, p.60) noted that the participants' regular activities are disrupted when participating in a social experiment. It was imperative therefore for the researcher to request their voluntary participation. The researcher acknowledged, in this case, that she is intruding in the participants' lives and therefore requested for their voluntary participation in the study. The researcher also acknowledged to the participants that their participation is voluntary and there is no monetary value attached to the participation. The participants were also informed that should they feel that they would like to withdraw their participation at any point during the research, they should feel free to do so. They were also assured that they would not be penalised in any way should they take such a decision. Kumar (2014, p.285), in his experience, asserts that most people do not participate in a study because of incentives, but because they realise the importance of the study. Kumar (2014, p.285) asserts that giving a small gift after having obtained your information as a token of appreciation is unethical. In the current study, the participants were not offered any incentive for their participation and this was explained by the researcher before the start of the interviews where the participants offered and were willing to be part of the study without expectation of any gifts and incentives for their contribution to the study.

3.10 Challenges in the implementation of fieldwork (semi-structured interviews)

3.10.1 Rescheduling of meetings

During the collection of data, there were cancellations of meetings due to other commitments of the respondents. However, the researcher had anticipated this occurring; as a result, the researcher had to recruit more respondents who had the same characteristics as those initially recruited. For example, if an appointment had been made with a councillor who was not available, another councillor was also recruited to be part of the research. Even though the

appointments were done a month before the interviews were to be conducted, there had to be rescheduling of meetings, due to the commitments of the respondents.

3.10.2 Busy schedule of respondents

Due to the nature of the respondents' busy schedules, there had to be rearrangement of the meetings and appointments to accommodate some of the respondents. Some of the respondents arrived late for the scheduled appointments, which affected the next appointment. Some of the appointments were scheduled two hours apart to accommodate driving to the interview venues, however due to the busy schedules, some respondents were caught up in traffic leading to the delay of the next appointment.

3.10.3 Limitations of the study

Limitations are the influences that are beyond the researcher`s control. The study is limited to the citizens within certain regions of the COJ, focusing on the citizens who have attended and those who did not attend public meetings. As far as the bottom-up component is concerned, the study utilised a small non-representative sample which cannot be generalised to a larger population. The research was based on a case study which focused on a few selected participants from Regions E and F and only has relevance within the City of Johannesburg. This means that the reader or a prospective researcher cannot make a blanket assumption that the findings of the study indicate a certain pattern that can generally occur in any environment. In addition, the study focused on public meetings as the method of public participation and did not consider other methods of public participation with emphasis on governance, accountability and management processes of public meetings.

3.11 Summary

In summary, a qualitative research method was chosen for this study. The main purpose was to respond to the main research question: what are the factors that citizens within the COJ considered as obstacles for public participation in public meetings? The research purposively sampled 10 participants with the aim to conduct semi-structured and in-depth interviews on the part of those who are responsible for creating the participatory platforms. The selection of purposive sampling assisted the researcher in determining the obstacles hindering the citizens within the COJ from participating in public meetings. Hence it was imperative to interview those who are responsible for creating participatory platforms besides interviewing relevant citizens for the relevant geographical community members and were inclusive of select civil society

organisations, and the focus was on both citizens who attend and those who do not attend public meetings. The main objectives of engaging in a research context with the selected participants were to obtain in-depth understandings of the perceptions of citizens towards public meetings, and to ascertain the factors underlying those perceptions. In addition, this part of the research focused on these citizens' experiences and observations on how public participation processes are managed in the COJ and the obstacles hindering effective participation. Data received from both semi-structured interviews and focus groups were recorded, transcribed and analysed. The researcher upheld the ethical considerations during and after the collection of data. Limitations of the study were explained for this study.

4 CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents data in the first place that were collected during the in-depth and semi-structured interviews with the participants who were strategically chosen, based on their understanding of how public meetings are conducted within the City of Johannesburg. The data presented in this chapter were also collected through focus group discussions and documentary analysis. This study employed triangulation to establish credibility. This was done by interviewing the COJ actors, in this instance, the ward administrators who are responsible for the administration of public meetings and the policy implementers. With the interviews public participation was explored through the eyes of the decision maker participants as they experience it in their daily lives; Documentary analysis assisted in revealing other sources of data that were not known by the participants who participated in the study**.** The respondents in the semi-structured interviews included the ward and PR councillors, ward committee member, community development worker, COJ Regional director, ward governance manager, ward administrator, representatives from NGOs, youth organisation representative CBOs, members of the community, and a COJ governance committee representative. The main purpose of the data collected during the semi- structured interviews was to understand the factors that citizens consider as obstacles to public participation in public meetings. This chapter presents the findings of this study categorised into themes. At the conclusion, the chapter provides a summary of the key issues presented. The research findings represent the views of participants of both interviews and focus groups who once attended the public meetings, but based on the stated factors that are mentioned in detail in this chapter, identified factors that can be obstacles for attendance of future public meetings by them and their fellow citizens.

The following were the main questions that this research aimed at addressing and the data to be presented revolves around these questions:

The main research question is: What are the factors that hinder public participation in public meetings within the COJ?

The sub-questions are:

1. What are the structures, mechanisms and processes used by the COJ to promote public participation?

2. What role do the COJ`s governance, accountability and management processes play in ensuring that citizens 'actively participate in public meetings?

3. What is the level of accountability in the COJ to enhance public participation in the public meetings?

4.2 Research findings

4.2.1 The findings from the semi-structured interviews

The main question of this research was: what are the factors that hinder the public participation in public meetings within the COJ?

The data collected were categorised into three themes: Accountability theme; Management theme and Governance theme. It was also imperative for this study to investigate if the identified themes could be related to the citizens' views on the obstacles that they consider as hindering public participation in public meetings. The literature offered provisional insights into local government governance processes, accountability and management of public participation processes.

4.2.1.1 Accountability theme

This section responded to the sub-questions that focused on the structures, mechanisms and processes used by the COJ to promote public participation. The research asked the question why public meetings are convened and whether the public meetings held are efficient with the view to test the basic understanding of the interview respondents about public meetings. This section refers to the findings from the interviews with participants. The participants of this section were comprised of those who are involved in the COJ participatory platforms.

Citizens` understanding about public meetings

This section assessed the participants understanding of the public meetings. All the participants from the interviews had agreed that public meetings are convened to give information and feedback to the citizens, update the citizens on the city`s activities as well as strengthening the relationship between the government and the people. According to Ms B (September, 2016) public meetings are convened with the understanding that the ward councillor can do nothing without the citizens. Ms B (September, 2016) expressed the opinion that citizens are expected to be the ambassadors to drive development within the government,

however she had the perception that, the city is the initiator and the citizens are supposed to stand up and tell the city what they see. The participants indicated that currently the city has a very good participatory structural platform for participation that prescribes that only the ward councillor can call a public meeting although these meetings are not effective. Public meetings give residents a structure that no one else can convene these meetings except the councillor. Ms A (August, 2016) identified the lack of consistency in holding these meetings as a problem and she felt that meetings are called as and when the city deems it fit. She however suggested that it would be ideal if these meetings are held on a monthly basis, once a month. Ms E (September, 2016) further indicated that the public meetings organised by the COJ are not reaching everyone within the municipality as this is evident in the response towards public meetings by the citizens.

a. Obstacles hindering citizens participating in public meetings

The following were the findings from the semi-structured interviews wherein the participants in the form of municipal elites identified factors that they considered as the obstacles hindering citizens from participating in public meetings. It was imperative to include the municipal elites in the discussions as they are familiar with the public participation processes in the public meetings and would be in a better position to have an informed perception regarding the matter, however, ordinary citizens from the community were also involved in the interviews to understand their perceptions on the COJ public participation processes in the management of public meetings. Although some of the respondents were municipal elites they are also citizens within the COJ and it was important to have a one-on-one engagement with them to understand their experiences on the COJ processes on public participation. Their views were inclusive of the self-critique to the internal processes used by the COJ as well as their personal experience as citizens within the COJ. The factors were outlined as follows:

Language as an obstacle hindering citizen participation

This section focused on understanding the participant's perceptions on the language used in public meetings within the COJ. The perception on the language used in public meetings varied from interview participant to participant as indicated by Mr I, Ms C and Ms D (September, 2016) who assert that in the public meetings in which they participated, everyone was afforded an opportunity to use the language of their choice when expressing themselves, even in vernacular. This contradicts the views of Ms E, Mr H, Mr F and Ms E (September, 2016) who indicated the public meetings they had attended previously were addressed in English and the target audience could not understand the contents of what was discussed,

and they felt that a translator is therefore required to ensure that every citizen is accommodated and is willing to participate in future meetings, although currently this is not happening in the COJ. Ms G (September, 2016) indicated that within an informal settlement setting, one must utilise the languages that are appropriate for them and currently this is not the case and has therefore noted it as an obstacle towards future participation. Ms A (August, 2016) indicated however, that the public meetings she previously attended were addressed in English as it is the language spoken by the majority in the ward within which she stays.

Public meetings used as a compliance issue and information sharing by officials

This section focused on the participants` perception of the city`s officials who are sent by the local government to address public meetings. The respondents in the interviews indicated that the city`s officials are not visible in the communities; there is no feedback from the officials when they have received concerns from citizens in the public meetings; as a result, citizens are discouraged from future participation (Ms A, August, 2016). However, Ms B (September, 2016) observed the wrong attitudes by the city officials towards the citizens as being rude, showing no respect for other people and not willing to embrace diversity which are linked to the perception on whether to participate in the next meeting or not. The turn-around issue on reported matter by the citizens has been identified as an issue of concern by Ms C and Mr I (September, 2016) wherein the city officials were viewed as not adhering to it, this frustrates citizens who will come for a meeting more than once without the reported issue being resolved. City Officials were perceived as not fulfilling the promises they had made in the public meetings. This was supported by Ms E and Mr H (September, 2016) who indicated that the city officials do not listen to the citizens' complaints and she advises that if the city officials can listen to the residents' concerns they will be willing to attend the future meetings. Ms D (August, 2016) indicated that the public meetings within the COJ have become talk shows with no actions on the concerns raised and this, she mentioned, discourages citizens from participating in future public meetings. The public meetings are made as once-off events and officials call these meetings when it suits them, and no feedback is given to the citizens about issues they have raised; as a result, the citizens do not see any reason for them to participate (Ms D, August, 2016). Further than that, people are not willing to participate as the city uses these meetings as information sessions about a certain programme where the citizens are expected to only avail themselves to listen to a city official and their input is not recognised, the meetings have been structured as a compliance issue.

The timing of the public meetings

This section focused on the participants' perception on the timing when the public meetings are scheduled whether it is convenient for the citizens to participate or not. The respondents in the interviews, identified the timing for convening public meetings as an obstacle towards participation in public meetings. This was indicated by Ms B (September, 2016) who felt that during the weekends, which is Saturday and Sundays, when most of the public meetings are convened, people are at church and attending stokvels, which impact their availability for attending public meetings. The study also revealed that the timing of the meeting can be an obstacle if the meeting is convened when people have gone to work; if there are no facilities in the vicinity and it is cold and drizzling; and also when there is no adequate infrastructure like a community hall, citizens are reluctant to participate (Ms G, September, 2016).

Public meetings used as political platforms/forums

The findings from the interviews also revealed that the public meetings were used as political platforms/forums by some of the city officials. The findings from these in-depth interviews with citizens from the COJ who are municipal elites revealed that public meetings are also used as political forums. Ms C (August, 2016) noted that there are many political organisations that have different views and want to pursue their own political interests; their conflicting interests have an impact on the way their affiliates respond to participation in public meetings. Political affiliations were identified as an obstacle in the sense that those representing opposition parties were seen to be disrupting the public meetings and not supporting the views of the facilitator or conveners of public meetings. Those who are not interested in politics are therefore not willing to participate in future meetings (Ms G, September, 2016).

Citizens feeling their views are not considered by officials

This section focused on the participant's perceptions of the attitudes from citizens towards the officials who are sent by the local government to address public meetings. The findings from the interviews revealed furthermore that when citizens feel their views are not considered by the city officials, they are reluctant to participate in future meetings (Ms G, September, 2016). The interviewees mentioned that citizens desire to find out if the issues to be raised at the meeting will be beneficial to them or not, if their participation is important and whether their opinions will be relevant. Citizens want to be listened to:

"*If you listen to them the first time; they can trust you and will be willing to come back to the meeting even when called again"* (Ms E, September, 2016).

"*Citizens lack interest in attending the public meetings; they don't pitch up and participate in meetings scheduled to discuss developments in their area but only to find out that after the meeting has been held they will complain and have questioning about the issues discussed in the meeting held whereas they didn't participate when an opportunity was given to them"* (Mr F, September, 2016).

The interview data also revealed that the citizens are not participating in public meetings because the city does not address the issues raised by the citizens; as a result, they are reluctant to attend the public meetings (Mr H, September, 2016). The city officials who are sent to address public meetings are not fulfilling their promises and there is no feedback on issues previously raised by the citizens (Mr I, August, 2016). This study findings were supported by Cogan (1992, p.7) who asserts that people want to follow leaders whose sense of excitement is revealed by their words and deeds. Cogan (1992, p.7) confirmed that if the public does not feel that it is being treated with respect, it will find a way to fight back whether by disrupting the proceedings or in some other way.

The participants were also asked about their perceptions of the attitudes by citizens towards local government officials sent by the city to address public meetings. The participants were asked to view their perception by also assessing if, in their experience, citizens' attitudes had an impact on the decision whether to participate in the next public meeting or not and the responses were noted as follows: The study revealed that there are some officials who do not stick to the agenda during the public meeting which leads to meetings being prolonged; and where meetings are scheduled for during the evening, these meetings end up finishing very late which is discouraging for the attendees without any form of transport back home after the public meeting to participate in the future meetings (Ms G, September, 2016). It was also revealed that citizens are discouraged from participation when officials have a predetermined agenda and do not allow citizen engagement and participation in the meeting (Ms E, September, 2016). The interview component of the study revealed that there is lack of confidence in the local government's ability to deliver on the service delivery promises, and this leads to the citizens having negative attitudes towards officials. Most of the local government officials are seen as corrupt and even if they come to public meetings, they are viewed as the ones who want to do self-enrichment and waste taxpayer money (Ms G and Ms E, September, 2016).

Parental roles of citizens

It was revealed in the interviews that in areas where people are employed and the majority of the citizens are the middle working class, they arrive home late due to late working hours and traffic problems, and the parental responsibilities require them to take care of their children; as a result, they find themselves being pressured by family commitments which makes it impossible for them to participate in public meetings (Mr F, September, 2016). This is evident in cases where there are no child minders to look after their children. It was also revealed that in some instances, people who participate in these public meetings are not the relevant target audience, but those who participate because they are available and there is nothing they can do at that moment, as a result they use these public meetings for social gathering purposes (Ms D, August, 2016).

Instability of permanent residency by the citizens

The interview component of the study also revealed that there are some parts of areas within the COJ, in this particular instance, in Region F which are considered as high transit wherein people reside for a 6month period moving from one place to another. In such conditions, it is difficult to maintain the same people attending the public meetings (Mr H, September, 2016). This is due to the instability of residents who are not residing in one area, they move from one area to another, and as a result, there is no consistency in attendance of the public meetings.

b. Factors that motivate citizens to participate in public meetings

The researcher engaged participants through the in-depth interviews to share their perceptions and experiences on what they think would motivate citizens to participate in the public meetings and the following factors were identified: This section focused on the interview participant's perceptions on the factors that they thought would motivate the citizens to consider participation in public meetings. The study revealed through the interview participants that Ms A felt that the city has introduced different communication platforms, but have not been receiving better responses with participation from citizens (Ms A, August, 2016). The study also revealed that participation is triggered positively when the citizens are of the view that the issues on the agenda of the public meetings are relevant for them, for example, if the meeting agenda is dealing with housing or billing related issues. Participation is likely to be very high in such meetings *(*Ms G, Ms D, Ms C and Ms B, September, 2016).

"It must not be stories and they don't want promises" (Ms B, September, 2016).

Another example was cited in these interviews with mostly municipal functionaries who are also citizens within the COJ that, if one is addressing a public meeting targeting the middle class and the issue to be discussed is about rates and taxes, the attendance will be positive as these issues affect them, but if one is naming a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) station in their vicinity and a public meeting to name the BRT station is convened, there will be poor attendance as the people are utilising their own vehicles not BRT and they are not interested in attending a meeting to discuss such issue (Ms E, September, 2016).

The study also revealed that it also depends on who convenes the public meeting and if the citizens have pressing issues, then they will be motivated to participate in such meeting. When the public notice indicates that there are issues of importance or relevance for them on the agenda, the citizens are motivated to participate. For example, in an informal settlement when housing issues will be addressed in a public meeting the citizens will participate actively and positively as they need houses (Ms C, and Ms G, September, 2016).

Ms D (August, 2016) indicated that *"public meetings are seen to be attended by those who are looking forward to government to assist them".* The participation of those who are viewed by the society as being able to provide for themselves make it for those to be selective in choosing which meetings to attend and assess who is the convener of the meeting for example, if the mayor convenes a meeting with the businesses they participate, but it is not the case with the public meetings in general (Ms D, August, 2016).

> *"When citizens feel acknowledged and embraced, when their views are taken into consideration, when they feel respected and treated with dignity they will be motivated to participate"* (Ms E, September, 2016).
>
> *"When citizens are familiar with the officials from the departments who are convening the public meeting they avail themselves to support the official through participating"* (Mr F, September, 2016).

Ms G (September, 2016) felt that *"it depends on the topic of the meeting, for example a councillor once called a rate payers public meeting which had an attendance of one person attending but all housing and job creation meetings are fully participated".*

Mr H (September, 2016) believed that there are good citizens who want to participate in the community affairs and are interested in finding out how the meeting affects them whether good or bad. Mr I (September, 2016) felt that citizens are motivated to participate when they are shown how important it is for them to raise their concerns and how their concerns will be addressed (Mr I, September, 2016).

c. The role of community structures in enhancing public participation

This section focused on the participant's perceptions on the role of community structures to enhance public participation. The researcher engaged with the participants, mostly municipal functionaries such as Regional Director, ward committee member and ward administrator, as these are people who are familiar with the public participation platforms to gain their insights and also to establish if they were aware of any community structures within their communities; if they ever engaged with any community structures and lastly, the role that the participants think the community structures can play in enhancing public participation. The following community structures were identified by the participants to be relevant for enhancing public participation in public meetings:

The role of the community policing forum

It was revealed in this study, that the community structures such as the Community Policing Forum where safety issues are discussed, can be useful tool to mobilise citizens to participate in public meetings.

The role of SANCO (South African National Congress)

Ms C (August, 2016) made special reference to community structures such as SANCO for having the influential power to mobilise people to participate in public meetings as they are on the ground and speak to communities all the times, although currently, these structures are not assisting in the mobilisation of citizens for public meetings.

The role of street patrollers

It was also revealed that street patrollers and safety structures are good initiatives on a volunteering basis and they are trusted by the citizens due to the level of response they offer to citizens when they need assistance. These structures can play a significant role in the mobilisation of citizens (Ms E, September, 2016).

The role of rate-payers associations

Ms E (September, 2016) felt that the rate-payers associations are known for alerting people on what is happening and they are familiar with each other. The city must acknowledge the existence of those structures as they are headed by influential people to align the vision of the

city to assist in addressing issues to be cascaded to the community (Ms E, September, 2016). This was confirmed by Mr F (September, 2016) who asserted:

> "*Residents' associations, recreational associations and NGOs in an area can play a meaningful role towards active participation in local government affairs. However, some of them are concentrating on self-enrichment, they appear organised in order to attract funding from the government."*

The role of NGOs

These community structures were identified in the interviews as having a meaningful role towards mobilising the citizens' to participate (Mr F, Ms D and Mr H, September, 2016). It was also noted that if the NGOs do not get support from the council and government, there is no need for them to be efficient. The importance of having these structures was emphasised and an example was offered by Mr I for a case when one is dealing with crime if there is no support of the police, they cannot be efficient (Mr I, August, 2016).

4.2.1.2 Management theme

This section intends to answer the sub-question which determines the level of accountability in the COJ to enhance public participation in the public meetings. This is also inclusive of the processes utilised by the COJ towards public meetings to enhance public participation. This section reports further on the findings from the in-depth interviews, which were conducted with mostly the municipal functionaries who are also citizens within the COJ to gain more insight on the public participation processes.

a. The process of inviting citizens to a public meeting

Communication channels for inviting citizens to public meetings

This section of the study focused on understanding the interview participants' perceptions on the channels of communications utilised in the COJ for mobilising citizens to participate in public meetings. The study was conducted in different geographical areas of the COJ and in this particular situation, a case study was conducted in Regions E and F which are not necessarily the same in terms of the people who reside in them. The diversity of the focus areas as a result had implications that the channels of communication are not the same. It was revealed that the process used by the COJ to invite citizens to a public meeting is through WhatsApp groups, pamphleteering through ward councillors, and having ward committees

distribute flyers amongst the community members, advertising of the meeting notices on the gates at the building entrances (Ms B, Ms A, Ms E, and Mr F, September, 2016). It was also noted that in some instances, the city first identifies the area which has challenges, invites the necessary stakeholders and departments to address those issues, then puts advertisements about the meeting in the local newspaper to invite residents. The city communication channels are also through the newspaper (Ms C, August, 2016).The participants indicated that these methods are relevant to the target audience. There are however other , areas that utilise social media like WhatsApp, Twitter and Facebook, although the challenge currently is that only the ward councillor has access to these whereas the administrators do not have access to these forms of social media (Ms E, Mr F, Mr I and Ms G, September, 2016). Through the ward governance, the advert is put out as to when the meeting will be held and the agenda of the public meeting is made known to the residents (Mr H, September, 2016). Mr I also suggested that the COJ should also consider having street meetings as opposed to public meetings as they are seen as effective. The channels of communication should be relevant to the target area i.e. in informal settlements, they utilised loudhailers (Mr H, September, 2016). In areas where there are flats, the city uses notices to advertise public meetings (Ms E, September, 2016).

The response of citizens when invited for public meetings

This section reports the data of the interview participants regarding their perceptions on the response of citizens when they are invited for public meetings, and were reported as follows:

The timing of the meeting

The study revealed that there is a challenge with response from the citizens when they are invited for a meeting, as a lot of people will confirm their attendance prior to the meeting but on the day of the meeting there will be more apologies (Ms A, August, 2016). The response of citizens when invited for public meetings depends on the time the meeting has been scheduled for, if it is rainy season or during winter and during festive seasons when people are away on family vacations, the attendance will be poor (Ms G, September, 2016).

Duplication and clashing of activities

The study revealed that the response of the citizens to public meetings also depends on what other activities are happening in the targeted community, for example, if there is a youth festival and the public meeting targeting the youth is scheduled for the same date and time,

the youth will not participate in the public meeting fully. One must not share the public meeting date with other local activities.

b. The accessibility of venues where public meetings are convened

This section focused on the perceptions of participants with regard to the accessibility of venues and locations where the public meetings are convened.

Venue accessibility for public meetings by citizens

Ms A (August, 2016) holds a different view from others:

> "*I am grateful for people who have opened their venues without payment for utilisation during public meetings i.e. sports and recreation centre."*

The interview part of this study revealed that the city on its own does not have enough facilities which are located conveniently for easy access to the citizens to attend public meetings. Due to the size of the municipal wards, it becomes difficult to find a central place and venue to hold public meetings, and only a few citizens near the venue where the public meeting will be held have to walk to the venue whilst others will be required to have transport arrangements to the venue of the public meeting. It was also noted that in some cases there are different meetings held to include all the citizens to ensure all receive the information. As there are no central venues to accommodate citizens to attend public meetings, the city relies on schools, churches, NGOs, private institutions like conference centres to hold public meetings. Ms G (September, 2016) felt that the accessibility of the venues where public meetings are held also depends on the political affiliations i.e. if the manager of the facility and one requesting the facility are from same political party, the facility is arranged quicker and easier, but if they belong to another party it becomes a difficult process.

c. Transport arrangement for citizens attending public meetings

This section dealt with understanding the perception of the interview participants to find out if there are any transport arrangements made by the city for the citizens to participate in the public meetings convened.

Availability and accessibility of transport to and from public meetings towards citizens

The study revealed through the interview participants that there is no transport arrangement for normal public meetings arranged by the ward councillors, except for broader meetings in the form of IDP where there are buses arranged for the citizens to be ferried to the venues where IDP sessions are facilitated (Ms G, Mr F, Ms E and Ms B, September, 2016). It was noted that other citizens who are eager to participate, will use lifts from each other to get to the venues where the public meetings are convened (Ms A, August, 2016). It was further noted that if the public meetings are at night, citizens are expected to have transport for them to participate in the public meeting. In addition, some meetings are extended up to 9pm or 10pm. As one of the problems, older people cannot be expected to walk at night (Ms G and Ms C, September, 2016).

d. Setting the dates and times for convening public meetings

This section reports on the perceptions of the interview participants on whose responsibility it is to set dates and times for convening public meetings.

Citizens engagement prior to convening public meetings

The interview data confirmed that the ward councillor and the ward committee members must reach an agreement on the date after consultation with the ward administrator of the particular ward convening the meeting, who will then arrange for the logistics, inclusive of sending invitations to the citizens to convene the public meeting (Ms E and Ms D, September, 2016). It was also noted that there are times where the community summonses the councillor to come and address them in a public meeting setting regarding an urgent matter of concern to the citizens (Ms E and Ms B, September, 2016). However, in this instance, the ward governance department, through the ward administrator, will assist with the administration of the public meeting and the ward councillor should have to confirm his /her availability (Ms B and Ms E, September, 2016). When the COJ departments request a public meeting with the councillor and the community, the relevant official requesting a public meeting suggests and proposes dates which the official and the ward councillor must both agree and proper logistical arrangements are done in consultation with the community through the invitations for a public meeting (Mr H and Ms E, September, 2016).

e. The capacity of ward governance to arrange public meetings

This section deals with the perceptions of the interview participants to assess whether the COJ ward governance department has adequate resources and capacity to arrange public meetings.

The administrative support for convening public meetings

The study showed through the interview participants that there is not enough capacity to assist the councillors in convening public meetings from the ward governance`s side, as currently there are instances where the ward committee members would be utilising their own airtime and petrol to further assist the councillor in co-ordinating the public meetings.

> "*The ward governance is expected to have adequate resources and capacity to arrange public meetings but from my experience I have learnt that they don't even have photocopier machines"* (Mr I, August, 2016).

> *"The COJ ward governance department has adequate resources and capacity to arrange public meetings… What is beating them is technology, and the intellectual side to enable the department to function efficiently*"(Ms D, August, 2016).

It was also noted that due to the lack of resources within the COJ ward governance department, the ward administrators are also not capacitated with social media platforms for easy communication to convene public meetings (Ms E, September, 2016). The role of ward governance was identified to be for drafting invitations to the public meetings, but the distribution of those invitations relies on the ward councillor (Ms E and Ms B, September, 2016).

f. The role of ward councillors in enhancing public participation in public meetings

This section reports on the perceptions and experiences of the interview participants with regard to their understanding of the role of ward councillors in improving public participation processes within the COJ. It was suggested that councillors should have extra support for them to improve public participation, for example, one of these interviewees argued that in each voting district there should be a representative who will assist the councillors in mobilising citizens to participate in public meetings (Ms A, August, 2016). Another identified role that councillors can play in enhancing public participation in public meetings can be seen by being visible in the wards and conducting public meetings in their wards (Ms C and Ms E, September, 2016). In areas where there are ratepayers associations, the councillors should utilise those meetings to address the community issues and should also have associations with other organisations within the wards (Mr H, Ms G and Ms E, September, 2016). It was also noted that the councillor`s role is to give feedback to the community through the public meetings, be

accountable and play an oversight role to ensure that the citizens' needs are addressed (Ms D and Ms B, September, 2016).

4.2.1.3 Governance theme

This section reports on the interviewees' perceptions and experiences of the role that governance processes within the COJ play in ensuring that the citizens actively participate in public meetings. The focus is on policy implementation to assess if the interviewees were aware of any COJ policy around public participation. The COJ has put in place the GDS 2040 outreach strategy to ensure meaningful public participation. The GDS outreach strategy also aims to ensure a holistic approach to public participation with regard to a developmental local government strategy for all. This section aims to ascertain the perceptions, knowledge and understanding of the interview participants with regard to the COJ GDS strategy. In addition, the section assesses the knowledge of participants on any COJ policy which deals with public participation.

a. Awareness of the COJ GDS outreach strategy

The study revealed through the interview participants that not all the citizens are aware of the COJ GDS outreach strategy. Ms A, Ms E, Mr F, Ms G, Mr H and Ms B (September, 2016) were aware of the COJ GDS strategy whilst Ms C and Mr I was not aware of the COJ GDS strategy.

> *"I am aware of the COJ GDS strategy though I was not involved, I recall there had been some engagements with the business forums, there was a vision established based on the then leading political party were programmes were prioritised, but there was no public consultation"* (Ms D, August, 2016).

The study revealed that some of the interview participants had heard of the COJ GDS strategy, but were not involved in its formulation. However, some of the participants were deployed in the regions to chair the processes (Ms B, September, 2016). The participants who were interviewed and reflected that they are not aware of the COJ GDS strategy could not identify if this strategy contributed to public participation or not (Ms C and Mr I, September, 2016). At the same time, they could not identify the barriers for implementing the GDS 2040 strategy successfully (Ms C and Mr I, September, 2016). These participants were also not aware of the processes followed in the formulation of the 2040 GDS strategy with regard to public participation (Ms C and Mr I, September, 2016). The participants who participated in the roll-out of the strategy, indicated that the discussions around the formulation of the strategy

occurred during the day when most of the citizens were at their workplaces, as a result, not all the citizens were made aware of the strategy and hence they did not participate (Ms A, Ms E, Ms D, Mr F, Ms G, Mr H and Ms B, September, 2016).

b. Citizen participation in the GDS outreach strategy

This section seeks to understand the participants' perceptions on whether the citizens have participated in the COJ GDS outreach strategy or not. Ms C (August, 2016) raised a concern regarding the involvement of citizens in the roll-out of the 2040 GDS strategy:

> "*I cannot recall of any engagement or public meeting to update the community in terms of addressing short and long term goals of the strategy and to identify areas of improvement."*

The interviewees felt that as the IDP gets introduced every year by the COJ, the same should be done for the GDS 2040 strategy and it should be reviewed on an annual basis (Mr F, Ms D and Ms E, September, 2016). The interviewees stressed that the then Mayor, Parks Tau, held structured meetings with the businesses and focused on external stakeholders in relation to the 2040 GDS strategy. These engagements produced the expectation that every citizen should be informed about the strategy which did not happen as arranged (Ms D, August, 2016).

c. Contribution of the GDS outreach strategy towards enhancing public participation

This section focuses on the perception of the interview participants on the contribution of the COJ GDS strategy towards enhancing public participation. Interviewees felt that the 2040 GDS strategy did not contribute to public participation as the implementers were viewed to have benchmarked models from overseas and come back to implement the strategy without proper consultation with the citizens (Ms A, Ms E, Ms D, Mr F, Ms G, Mr H and Ms B, September, 2016).

d. The role of citizens in improving policy on public participation

This section aims to get perception of interview participants on the role that the citizens can play in improving public participation in the COJ. The participants interviewed in this study felt that the citizens play a significant role in the improvement of policy and should be involved when the local government embarks on policy formulations (Ms A, Ms E, Ms D, Mr F, Ms G, Mr H and Ms B, September, 2016). It was also noted that citizens should be encouraged to

participate actively in public meetings and the benefit of them participating should also be emphasised by the policy implementers in the COJ (Ms A, Ms E, Ms D, Mr F, Ms G, Mr H and Ms B, September, 2016). Ms E (September, 2016) commented on this aspect of COJ policy implementation:

> *"Most of the policies within the COJ are imposed, that's why people infringe them, and the city must give responsibility to residents for them to own it, give them ownership of the space."*

e. The COJ approach on public participation (top-down/bottom-up)

This section reports on the perceptions of the interview participants of their understanding on the COJ leadership approach of ruling, whether it is a top-down or bottom-up approach.

The study revealed through the interview participants that the city adopts a top to bottom approach towards public participation *(*Ms C*,* Mr F, Mr H, Ms D, Ms E and Mr I, September, 2016). It was also noted that the city never takes the views of the citizens into consideration, for example, during IDP sessions, citizens are mobilised for them to share their views but no feedback is given on what can be addressed or not (Ms D and Mr I, September, 2016). At face value, one might think the city adopts bottom to top but it is a top to bottom approach (Ms D, August, 2016).

Ms E (September, 2016) emphasised this by indicating that:

> "*The COJ adopts a top-down approach, that's why most of the approved policies are infringed as the citizens where never consulted about them."*

4.2.2 The findings for the focus groups

This section responded to the sub-questions that focused on the structures, mechanisms and processes used by the COJ to promote public participation. This section refers to the findings from the focus group discussions number 1 interviews with participants from Region E. The participants of this section were comprised of those who are involved in the COJ participatory platforms and those who are not involved. The data was presented according to the three themes of accountability, management and governance processes.

4.2.2.1 Data presentation for focus group 1 (Region E)

4.2.2.1.1 THEME 1: Accountability theme (structure of the public meetings)

The focus group participants were asked about their experiences the last time they had found themselves in a public meeting and to explain if there was anything they liked or did not like about the meeting attended.

What participants liked or did not like about the previously attended public meeting

It was revealed in this focus group that public meetings could not stick to the set agenda, the citizens felt that they were not allowed to participate freely as officials portrayed themselves as being there to inform citizens and not to engage with the citizens (participant 5 and participant 3, September, 2016). The officials were identified as dictators of the public meetings and did not allow for free flow of discussions (participant 4, September, 2016). The citizens in this focus group felt that the public meetings are channelled by the officials in the direction the officials intended (participant 6, September, 2016).

It was also reported in this group that the public meetings have become talk shows as there is too much talk from the officials' side with no actions. As a result, this discouraged the citizens from attending future meetings (participants 7, 8 and 6, September, 2016). The participants felt that the public meetings are held for certain departments to comply as all they are interested in is to have the citizens signing in the attendance registers, which the officials will present to their managers at work while they are not interested in addressing the concerns raised by the citizens (participants 4,7 and 8, September, 2016). Participant 4 felt that:

> *"The public meeting should be referred to as the 'officials' meeting as there is nothing about the public involvement in these meetings."*
>
> *"We are doing public meetings for certain departments to comply, not bringing the results of what was decided into the meeting, all they know is to bring attendance registers for citizens to sign to confirm that the public meeting was held"* (participant 7, September, 2016).

Language used in the public meetings

The participants in this focus group discussion indicated that the public meetings they had previously attended were conducted in English which they felt did not include every citizen as not everyone understands English (participants 7 and 8, September, 2016). Participant 8 (September, 2016) gave an example that "*public meetings are addressed in English even in areas where there is no white person*".

Obstacles that stop people from the community from participating in public meetings organised by the city

It was noted in this group discussion that there is no transparency and honesty from the officials' side, who are sent by the city to address public meetings and this discourages future participation (participants 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8, September, 2016). These citizens felt that their concerns are not addressed and their views not heard as there is no feedback received on the issues raised previously (participants 7 and 8, September, 2016).

The participants emphasised that citizens need to feel that their inputs are considered for them to engage effectively (participants 3 and 6, September, 2016). It also came out that the citizens are interested in attending public meetings when the issues to be addressed are of importance to them, for example, housing issues and job creation meetings are fully supported (participants 3 and 5, September, 2016). Participants reported that if a CAPEX (Capital Expenditure) project will be introduced in a particular community and the residents are aware that the contractor awarded the contract is not from the same locality as they are, they will be reluctant to participate in the particular public meeting (participants 1, 2 and 5, September, 2016).

A core thrust of this discussion was that the citizens have lost confidence in the local government leadership; as a result, they cannot fully participate in the affairs of local government, as their concerns are not addressed (participants 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8, September, 2016). The participants raised a concern that the public meetings held are being politicised, for example, Participant 1 (September, 2016) raised his view that if a particular party`s councillor convenes a public meeting, the majority of the attendees in such meeting will be members of that particular party. Participant 1 (September, 2016) referred to the public meetings to be like political parties talking to each other, not necessarily public meetings as the other opposing parties' members would not take part in such a meeting.

4.2.2.1.2 THEME 2: Management theme (the administrative process of public meetings)

Communication channels used in the COJ

The participants in focus group discussion 1 confirmed that the city uses community radio stations to reach out to the people, inviting them to public meetings. It was also argued that the city does not appreciate stakeholders like the FBO`s (Faith-Based Organisations), and crèches to help spread the message on the planned public meetings so that all the citizens can be reached (participants 6, 7 and 8, September, 2016). The participants also indicated that the city also uses loudhailers to convene public meetings (participants 1, 2, 3 and 4, September, 2016). The participants also lamented that the loud-hailing process is conducted at the last minute, often a day before the public meeting or on the day, which makes it difficult to reach everyone (participants 5, 6 and 7, September, 2016). There are other traditional channels of communication which the city is currently not utilising like the word-of-mouth, which goes a long way in mobilising the community, said one of the participants (participant 2, September, 2016). It was also revealed that there is no process of confirming if the citizens have received the invitation to the public meetings (participants 5, 7 and 8, September, 2016). As a result, the convener of the meeting will only realise poor participation on the date and at the time of the scheduled meeting as there is no prior confirmation of attendance for participating in the public meetings (participants 5, 7 and 8, September, 2016). It was also revealed that the distribution process for public meetings invitation is not consistent, for example, participant 6 (September, 2016) mentioned:

> "*There are cases where the ward councillors will hand over public meetings invitations to people in the ward to distribute on his/her behalf and this people don't distribute as a result the citizens won't be notified of the scheduled public meeting and could not participate."*

Accessibility of venues where public meetings are convened

The group discussion revealed that the venues and locations utilised for the public meetings are not conveniently located for ease of access by the citizens (participants 3 and 6, September, 2016). It was also noted that, in some instances, officials arrive late for the scheduled public meetings, planned to commence at 18h00 or 19h00 which requires that the meetings be continued until late which is not safe for the citizens, especially if it is during the winter season (participant 6, September, 2016).

Transport arrangements for citizens participating in a public meeting

It was revealed that the city does not make transport arrangements for citizens who will be participating in the public meetings (participant 1, 3 and 8, September, 2016). It is the responsibility of the citizens to ensure that they reach the venue where the public meetings are convened and arrange how they will go back to their places of residence (participant 5, September, 2016).

The administrative role of ward governance

The focus group component of this study revealed furthermore that the COJ ward governance department is not easily accessible. For example, participant 3 (September, 2016) mentioned:

> "*If you need a letter from the ward governance you will be sent from pillar to post. You can hardly get assistance from this department, the staff seems not understand their mandate."*

The role of ward councillors in improving public participation

The participants in this focus group felt that ward councillors have a role to play in the improvement of public participation.

> "*The ward councillor is known by all people in the ward during elections, and when they are canvassing they knew where to go for support, even with public participation they must do the same and mobilise the citizens on behalf of the city"* (participant 8, September, 2016).

Currently the role of the councillors is compromised as they are expected to multitask due to expectations from citizens and these expectations from the citizens makes it difficult for citizens to trust the ward councillor and respond positively to the scheduled meetings as councillors are seen as corrupt, together with the officials (participant 5, September, 2016).

4.2.2.1.3 THEME 3: Governance theme (policy implementation)

This section meant to engage the participants of the focus group on their perceptions around the COJ policy implementation. The participants in this focus group discussion agreed that when policies are passed, there should be public participation and these policies should be known to the public (participants 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8, September, 2016). Some of the participants in this group were never involved in discussions around policy implementation in

the COJ (participants 5, 7 and 8, September, 2016). It was also revealed that the city`s leadership of ruling is the top-bottom approach as most of the policies, programmes and projects from the city comes as information sharing; no involvement of citizens is done (participants 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8, September, 2016).

4.2.2.2 Data presentation for focus group 2 (Region F)

This section responded to the sub-questions that focused on the structures, mechanisms and processes used by the COJ to promote public participation. This section refers to the findings from the focus group discussions 2 and the focus group interviews with participants from Region F. The participants of this section comprised those who are involved in the COJ participatory platforms and those who are not involved. The data is presented according to the three themes of accountability, management and governance processes.

4.2.2.2.1 THEME 1: Accountability theme (structure of the public meeting)

The participants in this focus group were asked to discuss their experiences the last time they had found themselves in a public meeting and to explain if there was anything they liked or did not like about the meeting attended. The discussion revealed a series of insights.

What participants liked or did not like about the previously attended public meeting

The participants in this focus group discussions agreed that they had participated in public meetings before and had observed that many citizens are not participating in public meetings (participants 3, 4, 5 and 7, September, 2016). It was revealed by the participants in this focus group discussion that citizens look at the notice boards to view the agenda; if there are job opportunities on the agenda, the response will be positive with regard to attendance (participants 1, 2, 4 and 6, September, 2016). The participants also observed that the city has recently convened rates and taxes public meetings in the year 2016 which were also poorly attended as the topic is not interesting to them for they owe money to the city (participants 1 and 5, September, 2016). It was noted that the turnout is partially good in the public meetings because people raise their concerns in the public meetings, wherein the officials promise to revert back to them with the feedback, which never happens (participant 5, September, 2016). People are tired of hearing repetitive promises without delivering, for example, participant 5 (September, 2016) recalls:

"*If a person attends a public meeting for the first time and raise a concern with feedback due in the next meeting, he/she comes for the feedback the second and third time and no response is given, that person will not show up for future public meetings."*

Language was identified by the participants in this focus group discussion as one of the obstacles discouraging citizens to participate in public meetings (participants 5, 7 and 8, September, 2016). For example, it was noted that, in the Inner city which is one of the areas of the current case study, 80% are not South Africans citizens, they are foreign nationals (French speaking), as a result language becomes a barrier i.e. the councillor has to speak in English and the audience does not understand.

"*The language in the meetings is inclusive of jargon English that is not easily understandable by a lay person" (participant 7, September, 2016).*

She made an example of the then Mayor's speech which was presented in English. She argued that some residents just saw other people clapping hands, not even knowing what the Mayor was talking about (participant 7, September, 2016). It was also revealed that public meetings are used by officials for compliance purposes (participants 1, 2, 4, 5, 7 and 8, September, 2016). It was also noted that the billing system made the residents angry with the city and they could not participate in the meetings as they were frustrated about the billing system (participants 1, 2 and 5, September, 2016).

Relationship between the local government officials and the citizens at the public meetings

The study revealed through the participants in the focus group discussion that the relationship between local government officials and the citizens has soured, as the officials do not show responsibility and this is judged by the manner in which they conduct the public meetings; proper feedback is not given to the citizens on previously raised issues (participants 3, 4, 5 and 8, September, 2016).

"*There is no punishment for officials who don't deliver in the city, as a result they do as they please*" (participant 3, September, 2016).

The focus group discussion stressed that the residents require reliability and trust from the city (participants 1, 3 and 6, September, 2016).

"*There should be honesty and transparency by the officials from the city*" (participant 8, September, 2016).

The role of community organisations in the process of public participation

The participants in this focus group discussion observed that the NGOs are working on their own projects, and most of them are silent at grassroots level in terms of mobilising communities participating in public meetings (participants 1, 5 and 7, September, 2016). The NGO`s were viewed as concerned with self-enrichment for them to attract funding from government (participants 1, 5 and 7, September, 2016).

4.2.2.2.2 THEME 2: Management theme (the administrative process of public meetings)

The participants in this focus group discussion revealed that there is no COJ official who is seen to be responsible for pasting the notices for public meetings invitations on community boards instead the ward councillor gives it to the ward committee members to distribute, who will then only paste it at convenient venues and this has an impact on who will get the invitation, based on their locations (participants 3, 5, 6 and 8, September, 2016).

It was also noted that the citizens do not respond to the public meetings invitations as their needs and concerns are not addressed by the city (participants 4, 5 and 6, September, 2016). It was also noted that there is no process of confirming if the citizens have received invitations to the public meetings (participants 1, 2, 5, 6 and 9, September, 2016). The focus group discussion revealed that there is no transport arrangement for the citizens to get to the venues where public meetings are held (participants 3, 4, 7 and 8, September, 2016). It was also revealed in this focus group discussion that public meetings are held upon the availability of the councillor and not based on the availability of the citizens (participants 4, 5, 6 and 7, September, 2016). The participants also observed that there are some ward councillors within the city who are hardly ever available for public meetings with the citizens (participants 3 and 5, September, 2016).

4.2.2.2.3 THEME 3: Governance theme (policy implementation)

The participants of this focus group were not aware of any COJ policy that spells out what form public participation should take in the COJ (participants 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8, September, 2016). The participants however acknowledged that during rates and taxes policy implementation, communities were engaged as to how the tariffs will rise and so that they are informed (participants 3, 4 and 6, September, 2016). The participants in this focus group also revealed that the city approach of ruling is top-down (participants 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8, September, 2016), for example, one participant felt:

"*They write their own things and pretend they are bringing it to the people whereas they have finalised in their offices*" (participant 6, September, 2016).

4.2.3 The findings for document analysis

Documentary analysis assisted in revealing other sources of data that were not known by the participants who participated in the study. Documentary analysis further assisted in availing other information relating to public participation that was not easily available in the public domain. From the document analysis it was evident that city's commitment to public participation and consultation is based on its constitutional and legal obligations and its overall governance model. The researcher in this instance, had reviewed the documents which had been featured in the literature review namely: The Public Service Commission study on public participation; the Municipal Systems Act No. 32 of 2000; the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa; The COJ IDP strategy reviewed document 2015/16; The Legislative Sector Public Participation Framework Document; The National Public Participation Framework; and the COJ growth and development strategy 2040.The documentary analysis helped the researcher to focus on the thematic analysis by outlining the three key concepts on which the study was focusing. The documentary analysis assisted in understanding the accountability of the COJ with regard to public participation, the management of public meetings and the processes utilised by the COJ to execute public participation in public meetings.

4.2.3.1 Theme 1: Accountability theme

From the document analysis, the following legislative provisions for effective community participation and engagements were identified:

- Chapter 2 of the Constitution: Sections 151(1)(e), 152, 195(e) pronounce on the participatory requirement.
- Municipal Structures Act No. 117 of 1998: Section 72 states that the objective of a ward committee is to enhance participatory democracy in local government.
- Municipal Systems Act No. 32 of 2000: Sections 16(1) and 29(b) pronounce on the development of a culture of governance that complements formal representatives' government with a system of participatory governance.
- The White Paper on Local Government (1998) emphasises that political leaders remain accountable and work within their mandates and allow consumers to have input on the way services are delivered.

- Sections of the Municipal Systems Act, No. 32 of 2000, for example, section 26, states that each municipality at the beginning of term of office must develop a five-year IDP and review this plan annually.

In further consideration of these documentary sources, Hopolang (2011) asserts of the expectation is for parliament to lead the way in taking forward the public participation concept. In 2011, this was done rigorously as a platform for public participation. The author however identified that the institution`s efforts were stagnant. As enshrined in the Constitution, the stagnation happens regardless of specific initiatives and programmes that were designed to ensure public involvement facilitation by parliament in all the functions in order to best represent the people of South Africa (Hopolang, 2011). Due to various factors such as time constraints, limited access to the media, and lack of education, the disadvantaged communities were often marginalised from decision making processes. Hopolang (2011) mentions time as an important cost to poorer sections of the population, especially to women and those who are employed. The parliament's inability to provide sufficient time to allow the public to prepare oral and written submissions, often providing them with three weeks or less which affects their capacity to make significant inputs in any legislative process, has further exacerbated this situation. The ability to access information regarding parliament or representative institutions at the municipal level created limited access to the media which had impacted negatively on some communities.

4.2.3.2 Theme 2: Management theme

With regard to the community facilities, the COJ IDP document (2015, p.22) acknowledges the pattern to be followed of residential segregation enforced during apartheid which grant access to and availability of the community facilities. Evidence has shown severe differences in the spatial distribution of libraries, health facilities, police stations and sports facilities. It was also stated in the COJ IDP document (2015, p.23), that the City has also prioritised a model in the then term of office, focused on examining accessibility to social and community facilities and ensuring that all residents would be able to access facilities. A challenge was presented for a number of reasons on the repair and maintenance of the facilities. However, the City has increased repairs and maintenance budgets and programmes as part of the management practice (COJ IDP document, 2015). In addition, focus programmes aimed at the prevention of vandalism of facilities as well as optimal usage of existing facilities, especially those that are currently underutilised were established (COJ IDP document, 2015).This was confirmed in the COJ`s IDP strategy reviewed in 2015 wherein a need was identified for a study that would explore the perceptions of the citizens towards public participation. This was as a result

of the quality of life and satisfaction with service delivery survey conducted across the COJ in June 2015 (COJ IDP document, 2015). In that study, it was indicated that there were low levels of participation shown by the city`s residents in terms of democratic participation where citizens were shown to be poorly participating in local government activities.

The Public Service Commission (2008, p.7) presented a report on the assessment of public participation practices in the public service which aimed to achieve the following objectives: Assess departments' guidelines or policies for promoting public participation in order to establish what these guidelines provide for; assess the types of structured methodologies or processes of public participation used; and identify the weaknesses and strengths of public participation practices in relation to service delivery within the Public Service. The findings of this assessment revealed that there is a common understanding of public participation in all 16 departments that participated in the study (Public Service Commission, 2008). A common understanding of public participation as a process of engaging citizens, to allow them to have a say in policy making and service delivery initiatives of government seems to be in place. However, the departments' actual implementation of public participation is not matching with this understanding (Public Service Commission, 2008).

The Public Service Commission (2008, p.10) also noted that the findings of their study showed that only 25% of the departments that participated in the study had public participation guidelines/policies in place which suggests that the existence of public participation guidelines and policies are uneven. These departments were the Presidency, Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG), Offices of the Premier in the Free State and Gauteng. Seventy five percent of the departments did not have public participation guidelines (Public Service Commission, 2008). This suggests that public participation is implemented in a haphazard manner without the necessary guidelines/policies to anchor public participation initiatives as it is not institutionalised in these departments (Public Service Commission, 2008).

It was also acknowledged through the assessment by the Public Service Commission (2008) of the challenges encountered by these departments in the application of their public participation practices, which were outlined as follows:

- Budgetary constraints;
- Lack of feedback-report on issues raised by citizens;
- Inadequate human resources;
- Poor institutional arrangements, such as weak ward committees and local government;
- Poor planning;

• Translation of documents into different languages to ensure that all the citizens receive information in the languages they are familiar with; and
• Political dynamics where political parties always fight for influence.

The study made by the Public Service Commission in 2008 revealed that there is inconsistency in the budget allocation for public participation which has been described to be varying from one department to another. Budget allocation for public participation within the sampled departments, namely, the national Department of Agriculture, Department of Provincial and Local Government, Department of Housing; the Presidency of South Africa and the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS); provincial departments inclusive of the Free State Department of Agriculture, Gauteng Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Environmental Affairs, Mpumalanga Department of Agriculture, Free State Department of Local Government and Housing, Gauteng Department of Local Government, Mpumalanga Department of Local Government, Gauteng Department of Housing, Free State Office of the Premier, Gauteng Office of the Premier and Mpumalanga Office of the Premier varied from R1.1 million to the highest being R12 million per annum. The Legislative Sector Public Participation Document (2013, p.35) confirmed that dedicated Public Participation Units (PPUs) exist in some provinces, while others use Communications Units for this function. However, in a number of provinces Public Participation units exist in name only. From the Provincial Legislature Performance Plans, it was not clear who is responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of PP structures and practices. In some provinces, such as Gauteng and Free State, there have been moves to set up standing committees on public participation to encourage more active public participation programmes and interaction with citizenry, but the success of these initiatives has yet to be demonstrated (Public Service Commission, 2008).

4.2.3.3 Theme 3: Governance theme

According to the COJ IDP 2015, Johannesburg's position as the leading metro in the country needs to be sustained and managed effectively. In order to tackle developmental challenges collectively, a sustained engagement between the city and various stakeholders was therefore required. Greater focus is needed on financial stabilisation, alternative funding options, and long-term capital planning and competitive tariffs to support sustainability. An encouragement through mentoring and mutual learning of a new cadre of local government leaders needed to be established. Co-ordination between the spheres of government, the city region and the global arena was also required. The platform to contribute to social cohesion has been provided through the governance structures and processes. The administrators and policy makers within the City of Johannesburg must guard against the mentioned characteristics to

promote efficient governance processes towards its citizens. The corrective intervention role of government proved to be damaged by the absence of good governance. Programmes of poverty alleviation and environmental protection, for example, can be totally undermined by a lack of public accountability, corruption and the capture of public services by elites. The poor may have inadequate access to legal remedies as funds intended for them are directed to the benefit of special interest groups. The ability of governments to carry out their functions effectively tends to be weakened by corruption. The administration can be crippled and equity diluted from the provision of government services and thus also determine social cohesiveness through bribery and nepotism. These social ills, to which the City of Johannesburg is not immune, may jeopardise the democratic rights and opportunities of the citizens to meaningfully participate in the affairs that concern their lives as well as making contributions and decisions that are relevant for their own development and improvement.

During the implementation of the City of Johannesburg's Growth and Development Strategy (GDS), many policy experts raised their concerns around governance in the City. They suggested that permanent monitors should be appointed to ensure that public participation is vital. Thus, the city should involve the public in decision-making (August 30, 2012). A transparent governance model was requested by the group of policy experts which would ensure residents were aligned with planning processes and were included in decision-making. The City of Johannesburg was also advised by the participants in the launch to examine its public participation process, so as to identify shortfalls *(*COJ GDS launch, August 30, 2012*).* The COJ public participation document as outlined in the IDP (2015/16), also mentioned the City of Johannesburg's commitment to participatory democracy and meaningful consultation through its well capacitated councillors and officials. This is done by ensuring an annual review of the needs of the community, its priorities to meet these needs; the organisational and delivery mechanisms to meet the needs of the community. Mechanisms such as ward committees, the petition and community participation system, and various stakeholders, as well as consultation forums, have been successfully established and implemented to deepen local democracy.

The cornerstone of the City's commitment to involving citizens and stakeholders in the matters of local government is through the approved public participation policy (COJ public participation policy, 2004). The City's view is that effective participation and input by stakeholders enhance local democracy, promotes consensus on development priorities, creates greater understanding of the work of elected representatives and officials and ensures transparency and accountability. The City of Johannesburg is committed to extending,

strengthening and deepening public participation by involving local communities and a variety of community, private sector and civil society organisations in consultative processes.

Consultation on the 2003/04 Integrated Development Plan and budget involved fourteen stakeholder sessions. These included combined sessions of wards per region, stakeholder forum meetings and a stakeholder summit. The attendance at the stakeholder sessions varied. At some sessions forty to fifty people attended, while at others, the participants numbered several hundred. A total of approximately 1200 people participated in the combined ward meetings and approximately 800 people attended the stakeholder summit. Participants were passionate in their opinions and the issues they raised. This was an indication of the value stakeholders attach to their voices being heard in decision-making processes in the City (COJ public participation document, 2004).

The well-capacitated councillors and officials of the City of Johannesburg also remain committed to participatory democracy and meaningful consultation by ensuring an annual review of the needs of the community, its priorities to meet these needs and the organisational and delivery mechanisms to meet the needs of the community. The city has successfully established and implemented mechanisms such as ward committees, petitions, community participation system and various stakeholder forum to deepen local democracy. The Council Speaker is a councillor, elected as chairperson of a municipal council, in terms of section 36 of the Municipal Structures Act (Act No.117 of 1998) and as envisaged in section 160(1)(b) of the Constitution. The presiding role over meetings of the council has been given to the speaker. In the City of Johannesburg, the role of the Speaker has been expanded to include the establishment of ward committees in each of the city's 109 wards, which are chaired by the ward Councillor. This role extends from the establishment (election) of ward committees, through to their ongoing, effective functioning. In this way, the Speaker plays a key role in ensuring public consultation, involvement and participation.

The ward committees work in collaboration with the ward councillor to ensure that public participation processes in the ward represent the full diversity of interests in that ward. Ward committees are obliged to hold a minimum of three community meetings per financial year to report on council's plans, successes and challenges. Most of the ward committees have met this requirement.

4.3 Summary

This chapter presented the findings gathered from the semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and documentary analysis, focusing on participation in public meetings in the City of Johannesburg. The interviews and the focus group discussions were structured to provide information on the factors that citizens within the COJ consider as obstacles hindering participation in public meetings. The data collected through the research instruments revealed that citizens consider the language used in public meetings as an obstacle since not every citizen understands English and most of the public meetings are addressed in English, regardless of the target audience. The findings further noted that the citizens consider public meetings as talk shows since there is no action, feedback and follow-up on the concerns raised by the citizens in the previous meetings. It was also noted that the parental roles of citizens can be obstacles to participation, particularly to the working class who arrive home late from work and have parental responsibilities as well. The political affiliations were also identified as an obstacle in a case where the public meetings are used as political platforms and forums. The data collected also revealed that the interest in participation also depends on the advertised topic on the agenda.

The findings further noted that timing of the meetings can be an obstacle as the COJ does not consult the citizens when setting the dates and times for the public meetings. The findings revealed that public participation also depends on who convened the public meeting and what the agenda for the meeting is for the citizens to decide whether to participate or not. The study revealed that the attitudes that citizens have towards local government and the local government officials affect their participation in public meetings. The process currently used by the COJ in sending out invitations for public meetings has been observed as an obstacle since not every citizen is included in the process. The accessibility of venues for holding public meetings was also an obstacle that citizens consider in participating in public meetings.

The study also noted that the COJ does not make provision for transport to the public meetings except for platforms such as IDP which disadvantage those without the transport to participate. Furthermore, the findings revealed that there are not enough resources and capacity for the COJ ward governance department to adequately arrange for public meetings. Lastly, the study revealed that the COJ approach towards public participation is the top-down approach where citizens felt they are not engaged and consulted when policies are implemented. Following the above data, it is evident that the processes and management for public meetings in the COJ had an impact on the citizens' participation in public meetings. The next chapter provides an analysis of this data to answer the research questions.

5 CHAPTER FIVE: INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher presents the interpretation and analysis of the findings from the previous chapter. It was emphasised by Merriam (1996, p.165) that data analysis is an interactive process throughout the research which allows the researcher to produce believable and trustworthy findings. The data analysis involves making sense out of the data collected which involves consolidating, reducing and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read. The researcher in this phase made sense of the data collected, comparing it to the literature already reviewed; made her own voice and comments based on what information was collected from the participants and the reviewed literature. Merriam (1996) further asserts that at the outset of a qualitative study, the researcher knows what the problem is and has selected a purposeful sample to collect data in order to address the problem, but the researcher does not know what will be discovered, what or on whom to concentrate or what the final analysis will be like. The final product is shaped by the data that are collected and the analysis that accompanies the entire process. Merriam (1996, p.176) summarised the data analysis phase as a process used to answer the research questions. She further highlights that the overall process of data analysis begins by identifying segments in the data that are responsive to the research questions.

Ebdon (2002) concluded that with regard to the size of the city, larger cities are more likely to provide formal opportunities for citizen input than are smaller cities. He further stated that part of the explanation for this practice may be that officials in smaller cities have more opportunity to interact with citizens during informal activities such as social club meetings or school activities. From the case of COJ, one would be interested in finding out if this is the case as one of the biggest municipalities in Gauteng. From the participants engaged in the semi-structured interviews and the two focus groups, the perception offered was evident that the COJ is regarded as one of the major cities but has thus not effectively ensured that the citizens are participating in public meetings. McComas (2006, p.165) further emphasised that while understanding the views of participants is important, it is perhaps just as important to understand the views of citizens who have opportunities to attend public meetings but choose not to, in efforts to determine what encourages or discourages participation.

Literature reviewed in chapter 2 of the research was used to analyse and interpret the findings with a particular focus on the conceptual framework. The interpretation and analysis of the findings was guided by the purpose of the study, which was to explore the factors that citizens consider as obstacles hindering public participation in public meetings, a case study in the City of Johannesburg. To interpret these findings, the researcher allocated themes as outlined from the previous chapter, in relation to the study's research questions. The researcher used thematic data analysis in order to generate codes from the transcripts of the respondents.

The following themes were generated and are discussed in this chapter:

- Accountability theme;
- Management theme;
- Governance theme.

5.2 Interpretation and analysis of research findings

5.2.1 Accountability theme

The participants who were interviewed and those who participated in the focus groups indicated that they had all previously participated into public meetings and some have facilitated the public meetings themselves in the form of ward councillors. These participants had thus observed the COJ public participation processes and system which had a benefit for this study as they had first-hand experiences of the roll-out of public participation processes within the COJ. From the engagement with the participants, it was revealed that citizens who participate in the public meetings do so with the view to get information and receive feedback on previously raised concerns and issues. The COJ has been acknowledged to have a good participatory structural platform which suggests that not everyone in the community can convene the public meetings, but such mandate has been given to the ward councillor only. The problem identified was that the city convenes these meetings when they deem fit, not based on the concerns of the citizens.

Obstacles that hinder citizens from participating in public meetings

The following were identified as the obstacles hindering citizens from participating in public meetings:

Language used in public meetings

The study revealed through the participants that the citizens within the COJ did not find it easy to meaningfully participate in the convened public meetings due to language barriers and in situations where there had been no interpreters to assist them to make meaningful contributions to conversations on issues that affect them. As a result, citizens felt left out from contributing to the affairs of local government. The study revealed through the participants that the citizens within the COJ are not given freedom of speech in the public meetings, wherein they can express themselves in their vernacular and can get the information from the city in their language of choice. This means messages that are meant for the citizens might not be received as the city intended, as some of the information might be distorted due to the citizens not understanding the language in which the official is presenting.

It was also noted that the COJ should consider the hiring of translators for the public meetings to ensure that all the citizens are accommodated and can express themselves in the language of choice. It was also noted that the officials are not accommodating in the language selection relevant for the target audience. This was evident when an example was given where even in the case of informal settlements, officials are addressing public meetings in English when it is known that there are no white people present; the dominant participants are people who need to be addressed in the vernacular. From the perception given, it is noted that the citizens are reluctant to participate further if they are not familiar with the content of what is discussed in these public meetings. The language in the meetings is inclusive of jargon English that is not easily understandable by a lay person. An example was cited wherein the former Mayor gave an address where other people were clapping hands to what he was saying whereas part of the audience did not understand the message that he was relaying to the audience as the speech was given in English.

In support of this finding, Gutas (2005) conducted a study in Cape Town that sheds light on the aspect of presentation of information. He observed that that presentations made at the meetings were technical and full of jargon which was not conducive to the relaying of information to the public due to the levels of education; some of the citizens felt left out in the process. Some of them also felt intimidated by the style of presentation. Simonsen and Robbins (2000) echo this concern with the content of the information being discussed when they recommend paying attention to the amount of information and how it is presented. They recommend using graphs, figures and tables targeted to the language of the lay-person. They further elaborated that designing a participation process that provides the information

necessary to educate and inform the participants, in a language they understand, is an important first step for gathering their preferences. The CoJ officials were revealed by the participants to be responsible for the reluctance of the citizens to attend future meetings. This was evident when the participants indicated that there is no feedback by the officials on the issues of concerns raised in the previous meetings by the citizens. This was also emphasised in the focus group discussions by one of the participant when he indicated: *"The language in the meetings is inclusive of jargon English that is not easily understandable by a lay person" (participant 7, September, 2016).*

Issues raised in the previous public meetings not addressed by the officials

The study revealed that citizens are discouraged from attending future meetings when the issues they have raised in the previous public meetings are not addressed by the officials. It was also noted that the citizens get frustrated if they attend public meetings more than once with the issues raised not being addressed and no proper feedback given to the citizens. This was evident in McComas *et al.* (2010) and Besley *et al.* (2012) that the structure of the public meeting that the citizen had attended previously plays a dominant role in the decision and willingness to attend future meetings. This was also emphasised by Ledingham (2001) when he indicated when citizens perceived that local government is providing benefits for local people, acting in the best interest of local people, and dedicating resources to support matters of importance to citizens in the exchange relationship between people and local government, they tend to participate in local government.

Citizens feeling that their views are not considered

The participants in this study revealed that citizens do not participate in public meetings as the city utilises these meetings as information sessions for certain programmes; the meetings have been structured as a compliance issue, they are regarded as once-off events and officials convene these meetings when they deem fit. This was supported by McComas (2006) and McComas (2009) when she argued that after the meeting, the citizens need to be assured of how their comments would be incorporated into the meeting outcome and future processes. She assured that this will help to demonstrate that the meeting was not pretence.

Abelson *et al*. (2003, p.248) also gave their input on the issue when they mentioned evidence that suggested that the public may not be that willing to participate in time consuming, face-to-face processes, especially if they cannot be assured that their involvement will make a difference. Citizens want to find out if the issues to be raised at the meeting will be beneficial to them or not, if their participation is important, and whether their opinion will be relevant.

Citizens want to be listened to. If you listen to them the first time; they will trust you and will be willing to come back to the meeting even when called again. This was emphasised by Besley *et al. (*2012) when they indicated that satisfaction with the public meetings is linked to the aspects or expectations for public meetings, perceptions that meetings provide an effective forum for communication and a belief in the credibility of the government sponsors of the meetings. Citizens would appreciate an assurance from the local government and its officials that they are valued and that they contribute towards effective public participation. By doing so, it is envisaged that the citizens would be eager to participate. This was further confirmed by Campt and Freeman (2010, p.3) who found that public officials should convene meetings which allow the participants to feel that they were invited to express themselves. These authors assert that if this has been done, the participants would feel connected with others. This will further provide a platform for participants to feel hopeful about the prospect of positively affecting their surroundings.

Dahlgren (2009) however, argued that people`s feeling of powerlessness about how politics works, citizens feeling that the mechanisms for democracy do not allow for their views to have much impact, and inequality in terms of class, gender and race, substantially hinder the extent to which it can be legitimately claimed that individuals are free and equal in their approach to participation. Instead, many will not feel free to participate. This was also supported by Halverson (2003, p.536) who confirmed that satisfaction is increased when citizens believe that the decision-makers take their comments seriously.

Citizens are often turned off by public meeting processes, and even those who participate in such meetings often feel that their voices will not make a difference (McComas, Besley & Trumbo, 2006). These authors also felt that the individual who believes the issue affects him/her, has knowledge of the time and location of the hearing, is free from competing demands, views himself in a responsible role, is knowledgeable about the project and believes his presence will have an impact, will be likely to attend a hearing. The processes towards public meetings discourage the citizens from participating in public meetings as they anticipate that the local government and its officials will not consider their views. This was also emphasised by McComas *et al. (*2006); Decker*, et al.* (2009); McComas *et al.* (2010) and Besley *et al. (*2012) when they indicated that citizens need to be offered an opportunity to realise their worth in decision-making and this will encourage attendance of public meetings.

Campt and Freeman (2010, p.3) assert that ideally, participants in a meeting convened by public officials should feel as though they were invited to express themselves. They should feel connected with others, and they should feel hopeful about the prospect of positively

affecting their surroundings. Public officials need to construct meetings differently from how they are typically organised for people to feel this way (Campt & Freeman, 2010). The traditional structure for meetings involves everyone listening to featured “spokespeople”, followed by a relatively small number of those in attendance giving a short speech at the microphone. This format creates the result of public meeting participation being like that at sporting events: attendees are primarily observers who express support or opposition to the central action in soft or loud cheers, boos, or side comments (Cogan, 1992, p.39). As to the common agency complaint that the public does not come out to the meetings because people do not care, they will care and they will come if they understand the purpose of the meeting, how the outcome affects them, and the role that they are expected to play in helping the agency reach a decision (Cogan, 1992, p.39).

Public meetings used as political platforms

The participants revealed that political affiliation is an obstacle contributing to the non-participation in future public meetings convened in the sense that those representing opposition parties were seen to be disrupting the public meetings and not supporting the views of the facilitator or conveners of public meetings; those who are not interested in politics are therefore not willing to participate in future meetings. This was supported by McComas *et al.* (2010) and Besley *et al.* (2012) when they indicated that in communities with many political organisations who might have different views and want to pursue their own political interests, their conflicting interests also have an impact in the way their affiliates respond to participation in public meetings. This relates to what Liewellyn (2005) outlined, that people who organise public meetings face classic dilemmas where there are conflicting ideals between the bureaucratic sphere and the open free sphere of the public discourse.

Parental roles of citizens

It was also revealed in this case study that the parental roles of citizens can be obstacles to participation, particularly to the working class who arrive home late from work due to traffic congestion and have parental responsibilities. The attendees of public meetings are employees and also parents, as a result, they do not have time to sit at a public venue for a public meeting and most of the time, people who go there are not the target markets. In the broader literature, this was also emphasised by Abelson *et al*. (2003) who indicated that the public participation processes utilised in the past may no longer be relevant for the current decision-making processes, since, in the current era, people have achieved higher education and have become more sophisticated.

Russell and Vidler (2000, p.59) found that citizen participants were difficult to engage because their main priorities were to provide for their families, not spend time in meetings. The authors confirmed the findings of the study that citizens are not willing to avail themselves in public meetings due to family commitments. It is therefore imperative for the local government to offer other avenues i.e. technological aspects, to such participants to be engaged in a form of participation that would not necessarily require physical and face-to-face meetings.

The timing of the public meeting

From the engagement with the case study participants, it was revealed that the timing of the public meetings is not convenient for the citizens as some of these public meetings are held on Saturdays and Sundays when people have personal commitments like going to church, attending funerals and stokvels. This was evident in Halverson (2003, p.536) when they mentioned that local meetings that carefully consider the use of time efficiently and effectively and provide comfortable sites for discussion tend to be accessible to a wide variety of people. The timing of the meeting was also identified as an obstacle if the meeting is convened when most people are at work; if there are no facilities in the vicinity and it is cold and drizzling and there is no adequate infrastructure like a community hall, citizens might be reluctant to participate.

On the same note, Piotrowski and Borry (2010) affirm that the public bodies are required by law to give notices in advance for meetings for the purpose of giving the public time to arrange attendance. In support of this issue, Cogan (1992, p.49) advised that though it may be customary to conduct official business on weekdays from 8am to 5pm, those hours are not convenient for a public meeting for anyone, except for the retired or the most committed citizen. The author therefore advised that one must choose the time for convening public meetings when most of the public can attend. He continued to advise that preferably 7 or 7:30 on a weekday evening is best, although a weekend morning or afternoon sometimes works. According to Cogan (1992), knowing the mores and customs of the community or audience will assist in planning accordingly.

Accessibility of venues where public meetings are held

The participants of the study revealed that venues that are utilised for public meetings within the COJ are not conveniently located for easy access to the citizens who are expected to participate in those meetings. This was emphasised by Irvin and Stansbury (2004, p.62) when they mentioned that when arranging public meetings, one should consider that key

stakeholders are not too geographically dispersed and that participants can easily reach meetings. The authors warned that citizens should have enough income to attend meetings without harming their ability to provide for their families. Irvin and Stansbury (2004) also identified another obstacle to the public participating in public meetings by indicating that when the region is geographically large or presents other obstacles (such as heavy traffic), it makes regular face-to-face meetings difficult. The City of Johannesburg is a busy city and there is traffic congestion across all areas which make it difficult for citizens to arrive on time for scheduled public meetings, both for those citizens who are using their own transport and those in public transport. The venues must be conveniently located for easy accessibility to the target audience and where the venues are geographically dispersed, alternative transport arrangements should be made to ensure that every citizen is afforded an opportunity to participate effectively. At the same time, Hock, Anderson and Potoski (2012, p.221) articulated that members of the public want their voice to have been heard, but they do not always show up in the venues designed for that to happen.

The role of community structures in enhancing participation

This study revealed that the community structures can play a meaningful role to enhance public participation should they be involved in the mobilisation of citizens. However, the participants of this study have observed and perceive that the city has not been utilising such structures to assist further in the mobilisation of citizens as they are at grassroots level. The community structures however, as observed and perceived by the participants were viewed to be focusing on their organisations for their own personal gains and profit and not necessarily prioritising other matters of importance, like the mobilisation of citizens to participate in local government affairs. This was supported by Gaventa and McGee (2010) when they assert that there has been extensive work done over the last decade which focused on citizen participation and citizen mobilisation with the purpose of strengthening the voice of civil society in governance and development programmes. This role of the civic organisations was confirmed by Reddy (1996, p.5) when he indicated that participation can be achieved through meetings with the ratepayers associations; vigilante groups and other social/political associations in small and large communities.

The role of community structures was also emphasised by Hughes (2006, p.70) when he assured that participation is most effective when there is a strong civil society. The groups which make up civil society bring people with common interests together so that they can express their opinions to government more effectively. Hughes (2006, p.70) asserts that government can make better decisions when they know what different members of the public

are thinking. He further assured that without a strong civil society, it is harder for a government to get feedback from the people it is supposed to serve and without this feedback, the government might become isolated and unstable. The findings of this study of the perception of participants on the role of the community structures in mobilising citizens towards public participation, contradicts what the COJ has indicated in their public participation policy that, as a city, they are committed to extending, strengthening and deepening public participation by involving local communities and a variety of community, private sector and civil society organisations in consultative processes. Although this is part of their mission, the participants affirm that, in reality, these structures are not fully functional in ensuring that the communities are mobilised to participate meaningfully in local government affairs.

Attitude of citizens towards local government officials

The study revealed that the attitudes that citizens have towards local government and the local government officials affect their participation in public meetings. The attitudes by the citizens, as described by the participants, emanates from the lack of feedback by the local government officials on issues previously raised by the citizens which are not addressed, and this affects future participation in the public meetings by citizens. The participants also described that, on the other hand, when citizens know the officials from the departments, they come and support the official through participating. This was evident in McComas *et al. (*2010) and Besley *et al.* (2012) when they indicated that the citizen's views about the public officials and views about the meeting relate to the individual`s willingness to attend future meetings. This finding confirms what McComas *et al. (*2010) and Besley *et al.* (2012) stated when they elucidated that public meetings vary in formality and format and that this often depends on who the organisers are and the context of the meeting. This might influence the participation of citizens towards public meetings. This study has revealed that the citizens' perception and lack of confidence in the local government ability to deliver on their promises lead to the citizens' attitudes towards officials.

5.2.2 Management theme

The study revealed that there is no consistency in terms of the process of inviting citizens to public meetings; as a result, various communication channels are utilised in the COJ in different wards for inviting citizens to public meetings, inclusive of WhatsApp groups, pamphleteering through ward councillors'; ward committees distributing notices amongst the community members, placement of the public meeting notices on the gates of the building entrances, newspaper print and community radio stations. The city identifies the area which

has challenges, invites the necessary stakeholders and departments to address those issues, puts adverts about the meeting in the local newspaper and places notices to invite residents.

Through the ward governance, the advertisement is put out as to when the meeting will be held and what the meeting is all about. The study also revealed the importance of the city to note the issues of concerns raised by the citizens at the public meetings and to give feedback in the next scheduled meeting as this was revealed as contributing to the reluctance of citizens to participate in future public meetings. These methods of communication in the form of loud-hailing and distribution of pamphlets were referred to as traditional methods by the participants and were considered to be out-dated in terms of the current era where people do not see any reason why they should attend these meetings, as technology is dictating how people should deal with these meetings. This was confirmed and supported by Conroy and Gordon (2003, p. 20) when they asserted that alternatives to the traditional public meeting approach, which aims to ensure that citizens are actively involved, especially utilising technology, potentially provides more meaningful learning opportunities for participants. These authors further assert that if irrelevant communication channels to the target audience are utilised in mobilising citizens' participation, there will be no improvement in the participation of the citizens. It was noted that citizen unfriendly notices are common roadblocks to successful public meetings (Cogan 1992, p.39).

The COJ inserts the agenda of the public meeting in the local newspaper, but the challenge is that not everyone has the opportunity to read such notices. Segmenting of citizens' preferred methods of communication is therefore relevant as there are areas within the COJ where the use of local newspapers is efficient to convene messages about the public meetings to the citizens. Even in areas where the local newspapers are the main source of communication, there is no guarantee that everyone has received and read the agenda prior to the public meeting being convened.

The city, on its own, does not have sufficient facilities convenient to the community. Due to the size of the wards, it becomes difficult to find a central place and venue to hold public meetings, and only people in the vicinity will walk to the venue, the rest will have to drive to the venue. As there are no central venues, the city relies on schools, churches, NGOs, private institutions like conference centres, to hold public meetings. This was however, noted in the COJ IDP that the then office of the Mayor prioritised a model focused on examining accessibility to social and community facilities and to ensuring that all residents are able to access facilities within the COJ.

Tuner and Weninger (2005) confirm this finding when they argued that the proximity of meeting locations to the place where citizens reside influences the active response towards public meetings. Therefore, administrators must choose convenient venues accessible to the targeted citizens in order to reach the venues where public meetings are held. This relates exactly to what Piotrowski and Borry (2010) stated, namely, that the physical space and location of where the public meeting is held have an impact on the level of citizen participation in the meeting. Halverson (2003, p.536) asserts that local meetings that use time efficiently and are carefully scheduled, and are comfortable sites for discussion tend to be accessible to a wide variety of people. According to Cogan (1992, p.49), even when a well-known place has been chosen, with accessible location, it should never be assumed that people will know where to go once they get there. Large and visible directional signs in the parking area, on the outside of the building, by the entry door, and on the inside, pointing to the specific meeting room should be posted. The author advised that one must also avoid the common error of scheduling a public meeting for the convenience of the sponsors rather than the audience (Cogan 1992, p.49).

The study also revealed that there are limited transport arrangements with regard to ensuring that the citizens reach the venues where public meetings are scheduled. It was revealed in this study that the city organises transport for the bigger meetings like the IDP, when they require good attendance but with the normal public meetings convened by the ward councillors there are no alternative transport arrangements. People use lifts from each other to get to participate in the meetings. The participants identified a challenge that as some meetings continue over the scheduled time; it is difficult for people to walk late at night, so as a result, people without transport will be reluctant to participate in a public meeting that is scheduled at night at a place that is not convenient for easy access to the citizens. This finding was supported by Gutas (2005), who described the failure to make arrangements concerning transport and using proper meeting times that would encourage participation in the public meetings as further factors that affect the participation of disadvantaged groups, such as women, farm workers and people with disabilities in the public meetings.

The dates and times for conducting public meetings are decided upon by the councillor and the department officials who might not necessarily engage with the citizens and request the ward governance office to arrange for the logistics to inform them of the dates and times for the public meeting. This was emphasised by Piotrowski and Borry (2010) when they indicated that those responsible for sending invitations for attendance of public meetings should ensure that the invitation includes everyone who is relevant, besides detailing the dates and times for the public meeting.

The COJ ward governance department is responsible for ensuring that there is efficient administration of the public meetings. This study found that the ward governance department has not been offering an administrative role in supporting the councillors to ensure the public participate in public meetings. Part of the reasons for the administrative role inefficiency has been identified as being the lack of adequate resources to co-ordinate public meetings. This contradicts Stewart (1995), who indicated that the councillors are offered organisational support in their roles by means of the local authorities providing settings, processes and information to maximise efficiency in their roles. Lee (2014, p.388) argued that it is worthwhile to examine the effect of public meetings on efficient administration. Nevertheless, there has been virtually no scholarly examination of the effect of public meetings on administrative performance. In other words, efficient administration is available only when agencies can produce and implement public policies without wasting resources. Given this definition, internal factors, such as red tape and information shortages have been emphasised as impediments to efficient administration (Lee, 2014). Citizen participation methods such as public meetings, which can provide venues for policy stakeholders to discuss policy problems and resolve possible controversies, have become highly meaningful in promoting efficient administrative performance (Lee, 2014, p.388).

5.2.3 Governance theme

The study revealed through the participants that citizens within the COJ are not aware of policies around public participation, however, they believed that citizens can play a meaningful role to improve policies if they are consulted and that citizens have a role in enhancing and improving policy on public participation. However, the participants in this study revealed that most of the city`s policies are imposed on the citizens; that is why citizens infringe them. This was confirmed by Gaventa and McGee (2010) when they indicated that citizens can engage with the state to create policy reforms which are important to the lives of poor people and for achieving social justice. They stated that literature has focused on strengthening the citizen voice and engagement in policy processes, mainly through participation within invited spaces created by the state. Gaventa and McGee (2010) also emphasised that the voice and advocacy literature focuses on explaining how to strengthen citizen engagement and influence in the policy process.

At the same time, Callahan (2007, p.183) asserts that when citizens are satisfied with the public sector and the overall implementation of public policy, they seek less active involvement in the deliberative process and are likely to be content as customers and clients of government. They trust government to do the right thing and act in the best interest of the

public. When there is greater dissatisfaction or frustration with government`s ability to effectively design and implement public programmes, there is greater interest in active citizen participation. Citizens become more active and involved and demand a greater role in the deliberative process because they no longer trust government to do the right thing (Callahan, 2007). The author further acknowledged that as a result of the lack of proper consultative processes with the citizens, there is rejection and by-passing of the policies by citizens. This rejection occurs when citizens felt that they were not involved in the formulation of these policies (Callahan, 2007, p.157). The study revealed that the city adopts a top to bottom approach towards public participation, although their slogan is “people shall govern”. The participants revealed that their perception on the approach of the city leadership is that the city never consults the people i.e. during IDPs people are called for them to share their views but no proper feedback is offered after these sessions. At face value, one might think the city adopts a bottom to top approach, but it is a top to bottom approach, and there is misalignment between the IDP and CBP.

The top-down approach was not favoured by Renn *et al*. (1995) for its lack of popular acceptance because it fails to consider the broader affected interests and tends to focus narrowly on scientific objectivity. The top-down approach tends to render outcomes that are incompetent and unworkable because they neglect to heed the knowledge of local people who are most familiar with the problem (Renn, *et al*., 1995). The citizens` trust in the local government will be created when they view government as a trustworthy and reliable source of information. Irvin and Stansbury (2004) emphasised that where communities are complacent, there is a strong argument for top-down administration simply on the grounds of efficiency.

According to Irvin and Stansbury (2004), several public participation methods have failed to result in the expected policy outcomes, mainly because of their exclusiveness and expense with regard to stakeholder interactions. Halverson (2003) asserts that open public meetings can make participants believe that the agency is responsive to public concerns, thereby increasing stakeholders’ acceptance of policy outcomes. Conroy and Gordon (2004, p.20) assert that public meetings provide a primary feedback-based participation approach. These meetings tend to emphasise simple one-way forms of communication that merely provide citizens with information in order to educate them to accept a decision that already has been made.

5.3 Summary

The COJ, being the harbour of most foreign nationals and citizens from other provinces, is at an advantage in hosting a large number of people, but the current study found that, despite the huge number of inhabitants, there is a challenge to ensure maximum public participation in public meetings. This study focused on the case study in Regions E and F where these foreign nationals are mostly to be found. This chapter revealed that the public participation in the City of Johannesburg is affected by governance, management and accountability towards public meetings. However, citizens have suggested areas of improvement for the COJ and should the city focus on those suggestions, there could be an improvement in public participation in the future. The study revealed that public participation is not an easy task to undertake and can also be a challenge encountered by the implementers. This was confirmed by Hulbert and Gupta (2015) when they criticised how literature has spoken highly of public participation, yet had done this without examining that participation can be a challenge when implemented through inappropriate mechanisms. This phenomenon relates to what Franklin and Ebdon (2002) acknowledged when they argued that citizen participation is not an easy task to undertake. It looks good on paper but is difficult to do in practice. The participants in this study perceived that the COJ should identify new approaches that will enhance two-way interactions between them and the citizens. In conclusion, Bevir (2009, p.96) indicated that the outcomes of governance measure the ability of policy makers to govern the society and he gave examples of the state's ability to raise the rate of participation as one of the outcomes of good governance.

6 CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The primary objective of the study was to explore the factors that citizens consider as obstacles for participating in public meetings in the City of Johannesburg with particular reference to Regions E and F as a case study. In comparative contexts, recommendations to undertake a study of this nature were made by McComas, Besley and Trumbo (2006) who asserted that there is a need for in-depth research on public meetings, as these relate to the broader phenomenon of public participation. They proposed, specifically, a study which focused on in-depth interviews or focus groups about public meetings. They asserted that it would be ideal to explore the perceptions of citizens towards public meetings. The COJ in its IDP (2015) equally identified the need for a study to explore perceptions of the city`s citizens towards public participation and in this regard, a case study was conducted in Regions E and F. Besley, McComas and Trumbo (2012), in their study on citizens' views about public meetings, went further and showed that there is a need for further research, which needs to identify a complete range of variables when finding out the views of citizens about public meetings.

McComas (2006, p. 165) quoted the work of Cole and Caputo (1984), Kasperson (1986) and Kihl (1985), all of whom noted the absence of detailed research on public meetings. They, too, noted that there should be studies that examine citizen attitudes toward public meetings. Typically, studies that mention impacts of public meetings on participants do not include interviews with participants. The significance of this study has been on the basis that most studies conducted with regard to public participation did not focus on the role that governance played in enhancing or hindering public participation, the accountability of the local government to ensure public participation and the management processes for public participating in public meetings. This study, through engagement with the participants via semi-structured interviews and the two focus groups, revealed that there are obstacles hindering public participation in the public meetings within the COJ and it was further noted that the management process of public meetings, and the governance process of public participation and accountability of the COJ towards public participation were the main contributing factors towards the obstacles that hinder public participation in public meetings. This was obtained through investigating the perceptions of citizens as well as municipal role players towards understanding the factors that hinder public participation in public meetings.

6.2. Problem statement pursued

Although there are both structures and processes in place to ensure public participation in legislative processes in the COJ, it is clear that there are many gaps between how systems are intended to work and how they actually operate in practice (Legislative Sector Public Participation Document Support Report, 2013). The COJ is faced with a challenge of participation in public meetings for developmental programmes and this study sought to explore the obstacles encountered by citizens in their quest to participate meaningfully. No known research has been conducted in or on the COJ concerning specifically the perceptions and views of citizens on public meetings. This was confirmed in the COJ`s IDP strategy reviewed in 2015, wherein a need was identified for a study that would explore the perceptions of the citizens towards public participation. This was as a result of the quality of life and satisfaction with service delivery survey conducted across the COJ in June 2015. In that study, it was indicated that there had been low levels of participation shown by the city`s residents in terms of democratic participation. The study was conducted in the COJ in Gauteng Province and the research focused on the time period between 2011-2016. This period covers the term in which the COJ has put in place the GDS 2040 outreach strategy to ensure meaningful public participation. The current study intended to obtain evidence on the perceptions of the citizens within the COJ about the public meetings. Despite the efforts by the local government to ensure governance that engages citizens thoroughly and that elicits maximum buy-in from the citizens, there are challenges with ensuring efficient public participation. The response of the citizens with regard to public participation processes has thus motivated this study which had the core empirical objective of ascertaining what perceptions citizens have with regard to the public meetings as an integral part of the public participation process. The study thus explored the views of the citizens within the COJ in the form of the selection of face-to-face interviews with the citizens themselves to understand factors underlying their perceptions of public meetings.

The research therefore filled the knowledge gap, as the researcher has noted from the literature review that there is little research written about the citizens' views and perceptions about public meetings with specific reference to the South African context, and the COJ, in particular. McComas *et al.* (2006) and McComas *et al. (*2010) confirmed that little has been researched with regard to the rituals of public meetings. Christens and Speer (2011, p.25) have not understood about what causes some people to stay involved in activities such as community organising over time, while others become inactive. The current research project thus helped in building understanding of the views of the participants of the case study within the COJ.

This study also sought to determine whether public participation in the COJ follows a top-down approach wherein the policy makers draft and implement policies without acknowledging the citizens or bottom–top approach wherein decisions taken are informed by the consultation done with the citizens first. The top-down approach was criticised by Renn *et al*. (1995) for its lack of popular acceptance because it fails to consider the broader affected interests and tends to focus narrowly on scientific objectivity. The top-down approach tends to render outcomes that are incompetent and unworkable because they neglect to heed the knowledge of local people who are most familiar with the problem (Renn, *et al*., 1995). However, Webler and Tuler (2000) were of the opinion that these criticisms can be addressed adequately by designing participatory processes aimed at rendering effective policy outputs and meeting democratic expectations.

The study established if the participants of the case study were aware of the leadership approach of ruling for the COJ to ascertain whether the approach is the top-down or bottom-up approach. There is a gap between the COJ`s 2040 GDS implementation plans versus the actual roll-out of the strategy as there is no effective participation on the part of the citizens to ensure the successful roll- out of the strategy. Hence, this study determined what the obstacles are that are hindering effective participation from the citizens within the COJ with particular reference to a case study in Regions E and F.

6.3. Purpose statement pursued

The purpose of the study was to identify the factors that hinder public participation in public meetings within the COJ with special reference to:

- Governance processes;
- Accountability processes; and
- Management of public meetings.

The study determined if there was alignment between the structures and the processes of public participation within the COJ. The study also explored the perceptions of the citizens with regard to public meetings and the factors influencing their perceptions. A study of this nature contributes to the academic body of knowledge concerning how modern government public policy-making processes should address the issues of public participation.

6.4. Literature reviewed

This study reviewed literature with specific reference to the questions the research sought to answer i.e. the role facilitated by the COJ`s governance, accountability and management processes to ensure that citizens participate in public meetings; the structures, mechanisms and processes used by the COJ to promote public participation, the level of accountability in the COJ to enhance public participation in the public meetings and the factors that hinder the public participation in public meetings within the COJ.

The literature reviewed found that the factors that citizens consider as obstacles for participating in public meetings were the following: the structure of the public meeting that citizens had attended previously and the assurance that their comments would be incorporated into the meeting outcome and future processes; the public may not be willing to participate in time consuming, face-to-face processes, especially if they cannot be assured that their involvement will make a difference; how the information was presented at the public meetings i.e. presentations which are technical and full of jargon; lack of participant knowledge; the thoughts of citizens towards participation; citizen's feeling of powerlessness about how politics works; citizens feeling that the mechanisms for democracy do not allow for their views to have much impact, and inequality in terms of class, gender and race substantially hinder the extent to which it can be legitimately claimed that individuals are free and equal in their approach to participation.

The researcher had to select the relevant theories for this study which were suitable for the current study. The basis for the selection of these theories was their relevance for public participation and dealing with people`s perceptions and were identified as follows: the COJ governance model, the shapers of perception, the theory of reasoned action and planned behaviour, the theory on citizen participation, as well as the civic voluntarism model.

6.5. Research findings in the study

The findings of the current study have confirmed the knowledge that was gained from the literature review regarding factors that citizens consider as obstacles for public participating in public meetings. In addition, there were new insights that emerged on the factors considered by citizens as obstacles, with particular reference to a region in the City of Johannesburg. This section summarises the core findings that the study obtained through the two focus groups and a series of semi-structured interviews. As one of the core findings, the data revealed that citizens consider the language used in public meetings as an obstacle as not every citizen understands English and most of the public meetings are addressed in English, regardless of the target audience. Another core finding was that citizens consider public meetings as talk

shows since they experience no actions, feedback and follow-up on the concerns that they raised in the previous meetings. A third essential finding was that citizens` parental roles could be obstacles to participation, particularly for the working parents who arrive home late from work and have parental responsibilities. Political affiliations were also identified as an obstacle in a case where the public meetings are used as political platforms and forums.

Further important findings included that the timing of the meetings can be an obstacle as the COJ does not consult the citizens when setting the dates and times for the public meetings. The study revealed that public participation also depends on who convened the public meeting and what the agenda for the meeting is for the citizens to decide whether to participate or not.

The study has also indicated that the attitudes that citizens have towards local government and the local government officials affect their participation in public meetings. For example, the process currently used by the COJ in sending out invitations to public meetings has been observed as an obstacle to participation, since not every citizen is included in the process. The accessibility of venues to hold public meetings was an additional and important obstacle that citizens consider when deciding whether they will participate in public meetings or not. The study noted the citizens` concern that the COJ does not make provision for transport to the public meetings, except for platforms such as IDP, which disadvantages those without transport.

The study findings also showed that there are not enough resources and capacity for the COJ ward governance department to adequately arrange for public meetings that will address all of the citizens` concerns. Lastly, the study revealed that the COJ approach towards public participation is the top-down approach where citizens felt they are not engaged and consulted when policies are implemented.

6.6. Conclusions

This chapter has drawn conclusions from the study in accordance with the findings and data analysis as presented in chapters four and five respectively. Furthermore, this study provides recommendations for consideration by the City of Johannesburg. In conclusion, this study found the COJ`s current structures, mechanisms and processes utilised to promote public participation generally also play a contributing role towards the participation of citizens in public meetings. The oversight role of governance, accountability and management of public meetings within the COJ also appear good on paper as per evidence in the document analysis, though it is difficult to implement in practice. The COJ is faced with a challenge of lack of participation in public meetings for developmental programmes and this study explored the obstacles encountered by citizens in their quest to participate meaningfully. This was

confirmed in the COJ`s IDP strategy reviewed in 2015 wherein a need was identified for a study that explored the perceptions of the citizens towards public participation. This was as a result of the quality of life and satisfaction with service delivery survey conducted across the COJ in June 2015. In that study, it was indicated that there were low levels of participation shown by the city`s residents in terms of democratic participation where citizens were shown to be participating poorly in local government activities. The researcher concurred with Mills and Birks (2014), who recognised a constructivist research paradigm as the reality that is constructed by those who experienced it. The researcher gathered the views of citizens towards public meetings as they are expected to effectively participate in these forums. The research adopted a constructivist or an interpretive social science research paradigm which Neuman (2014) described as the process whereby the researcher learns the personal reasons and motives shaping the individual`s internal feelings and guides the decision to act in a particular way. The current study concludes that when the local government has been failing to raise the rate of participation is an indication of poor governance from the local government side. This is evident when there is no oversight role to ensure that citizens are mobilised to maximise their involvement in public participation and thereby increase their chances for them to have their voices heard and contribute meaningfully.

6.7. Suggestions for improvement of public meeting practice

This section covers the views of the participants from both focus groups and semi-structured interviewed where the study probed their suggestions to the COJ for the improvement on public meetings` practices in the future. The questions were related to the participants giving advice to the city on how they thought citizens might to be interested in becoming part of public participation events. Further questions also probed the participants' views on whether they believed there are certain aspects at which the COJ is doing right in terms of public participation and where do they think there was a need for improvement.

In development of further citizen participatory practice, municipalities like the COJ may gain from the guidelines that emerged from this research project. From the discussion with the participants the following suggestions were outlined:

- A partnership between the city, the councillors and the building managers should be established as most building managers do not allow posters to be posted on walls. The city needs to have a by-law instructing each building manager to have a notice board/space where communications can be placed.

- The city should make use of newspapers and forms of social media like WhatsApp, Twitter, and Facebook as only the ward councillors have access to the social media whereas the ward administrators do not have access. Also use emails and a list of people created in the area where the meeting will be held.
- There is no process to confirm whether the citizens have received the invitations to the public meetings, for example, in areas where local newspaper delivery is efficient, the city must make sure the public meeting get advertised and distributed on time.
- In areas where there are ratepayer associations, the ward councillors should also utilise those meetings to address community issues. Councillors should interact with other organisations within the wards to ensure public participate in public meetings;
- Majority of the residents within the COJ have billing accounts which means the COJ have access to the information of these residents, but the city is not utilising the information at their disposal for inviting citizens to the public meetings;
- The COJ should also consider having street meetings as opposed to public meetings as they are considered effective;
- The COJ should engage schools to give out information and nurture public participation at a very early age;
- The COJ should maximise the engagement with civic organisations, churches to enhance public participation; they must have a database of faith based organisations;
- During election periods, there are attendance registers; as a result, the COJ should get the contact lists from the voters roll and engage citizens to participate; the city must consider catering in public meetings as some of the attendees are unemployed and they stay for longer hours in public meetings without any refreshments; this was supported by Cogan (2000, p.51), who saw a hospitable touch that have put many a potentially contentious meeting on a civilised track through the provision of refreshments. This was viewed by Cogan (2000) as a pleasant hospitality which ensures that people have the opportunity to chat over a cup of hot coffee or tea or, on a particularly warm evening, a cold glass of punch. He further advised that one must check out a local caterer or reasonably priced delivery beverage service, if the facility itself cannot make refreshments available. He added that; cookies are a nice addition although not mandatory. They can be obtained as a donation from a nearby bakery or supermarket if the donor receives recognition on the programme or a small tasteful notice is posted on the table;
- The COJ must use attendance registers of previously attendees of public meetings to send sms's and invite residents;
- Invitations sent out for public meetings should be inclusive of all areas within the wards;

- The COJ must hire proper messengers to deliver public meeting notices;
- People do not see any reason why they should go to these meetings, technology is dictating to us how we should deal with these meetings, and people must do conference calls. People are not interested to go and listen to local government as it is now politicised;
- There is a need to improve, train and teach the staff at the ward governance department as some are arrogant and will not prioritise the requests for advertising the public meetings as instructed by the ward councillors;
- In a city that is technologically advanced, and has a highly sophisticated community, the COJ can come up with innovative meeting designs which will develop a new and useful way of communicating with its citizens. The majority of the citizens within the city has access to current social media like WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook and are in possession of a cellular phone with which the city can maximise participation, through the use of some of these platforms of engagement. However, the city is not utilising the available resources at their disposal to maximise the participation of citizens in the issues that concern them.
- It is recommended that the City should engage and establish partnerships with the relevant community structures like the NGOs to maximise public participation;
- The local government should ensure that the civic society has a significant role in ensuring effective public participation and thereby mobilising the communities to participate meaningfully. It is envisaged that strengthening the voice of civil society can be beneficial to both the citizens and the local government as these are platforms where the majority of the citizens affiliate under, for example, in the case of faith -based organisations, the majority of citizens` fellowship under a certain denomination, therefore the government can mobilise the citizens through this platform and be assured of reaching the maximum number of citizens. It is believed that those who are in fellowship under the leadership of faith based organisations tend to have trust and belief in the senior leadership of pastors and therefore will receive the message from those leaders with ease.
- It is recommended that the City capacitate the ward governance department with the necessary resources and capacity to enhance public participation.

6.8. Recommendations

6.8.1. Recommendations for the City of Johannesburg

Whilst it necessary for local government to develop policies on public participation and have them implemented efficiently and effectively, the following were the recommendations made to the COJ emanating from the findings of the current study:

- It is recommended that the city be innovative in other forms of engaging with the citizens as opposed to convening public meetings;
- It is recommended that the City align their systems and processes on public participation to harmonise and maximise participation of citizens in the affairs of local government.

6.9. Future research

Due to the purpose of this research, the researcher needed to do an in-depth study where a decision to focus on a smaller geographical area was considered in this regard a case study was therefore conducted in Regions E and F; as a result this research could not focus on the entire City of Johannesburg. Subsequent to that, the research could not interrogate the role of NGOs in maximising public participation; future research can explore further the role that the community structures, particularly the NGOs can play. Gaventa and McGee (2010) argued that there has been extensive work done over the past decade which focused on citizen participation and citizen mobilisation, with the purpose of strengthening the voice of civil society in governance and development programmes.

Future research could focus on establishing the effectiveness of civil society in enhancing public participation. Since this study focused on the factors that citizens consider as obstacles for public participation in public meetings and predominantly the views from the citizen's point of view were highlighted, it would also be ideal to conduct a study with the senior officials within the government department and those responsible for policy formulation, to understand the challenges they are faced with in ensuring that the public participation process is efficient in the City of Johannesburg. One would therefore make a holistic comparison between the obstacles as viewed by the citizens, as well as those views made by the policy makers' point of view. It is also recommended that future research explores the role of media to maximise public participation within the local government environment.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: SEMI -STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Date :……

Time :……

Gender of the interviewee :……..

Location/Street name :…….

a. **Introduction**

The researcher will introduce herself to the participant.

Hello, my name is Molly Netshimbolimbo. I am currently studying towards a Master of Management by Dissertation degree at the University of Witwatersrand. I am conducting research on the factors that citizens consider as obstacles to public participation in public meetings convened by the City of Johannesburg. My research is also a case study of Johannesburg.

b. **Explaining and signing of consent form**

The researcher will go through the ethical considerations part of the study with the participants.

You are also reminded that participating in this study will be voluntary and that you should feel free to discontinue if you are no longer comfortable. Withdrawal will not be harmful to you in any way.

Any study records that identify you will be kept confidential to the extent possible by law. The records from your participation may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including members of my university faculty (all of these people are required to keep your identity confidential). Otherwise, records that identify you will be

available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records.

Thus the information you provide will not be published unless you give your specific permission in writing at the end of this consent form. All identifying information will be kept in a locked file cabinet and will not be available to others. We will refer to you by a code number or pseudonym (another name) in any publication of the research results.

There are no immediate benefits to you from participating in this study. However, this study will be extremely helpful to me in developing a research report that will add to current aspects and thoughts on the factors that you consider as obstacles to public participation in public meetings. If you would like to receive feedback on our study; I will record your contact details separately on a separate sheet of paper and can send you the results of the study when it is completed sometime after February 2017.

This research has been approved by the University of the Witwatersrand. If you have any complaints about ethical aspects of the research or feel that you have been harmed in any way by participating in this study, please call the School of Governance at the University of Witwatersrand. If you have concerns or questions about the research you may call the Course Convener, Dr. Horacio Lucas Zandamela on +27 11717 3692. This research has purposefully selected individuals with knowledge of public meetings in order to elaborate further on the obstacles hindering participation towards public meetings in the City of Johannesburg.

c. **Purpose of the research**

The purpose of the study will be outlined to the participant.

I am asking that you allow me to conduct an interview with you about your knowledge, understandings and opinions on the topic of this study. It will take a maximum of an hour for you to participate in the interview. For me to be able to report the exact response you give I request to record our conversation by tape.

2.1. **PERSONAL INFORMATION**

2.1.1. What language do you prefer for conducting this interview?

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2.1.2. Where do you reside within the COJ?

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2.1.3. What is your role in the community?

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2.2. **STRUCTURE OF THE PUBLIC MEETINGS**

2.2.1. What is your understanding of public meetings in relation to the objectives of why these meetings are convened; how effective are public meetings; and how they are convened?

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2.2.2. What are your views on the format and shape of the public meeting in relation to the style of presentation used; the language used in the public meeting?

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2.2.3. Have you ever observed any obstacles that might impact on citizens participating in public meetings?

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2.2.4. In your experience what are the obstacles hindering citizens from participating in public meetings?

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2.2.5. What is the attitude of citizens towards local government officials who are sent by the city to address public meetings? At what point do you think this attitude affects participation?

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2.2.6. In your own experience what motivates citizens to participate in public meetings?

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2.2.7. Are you aware of community structures within your community? Have you ever engage with such structures? Having observed these community structures, what role do you think they can play in enhancing public participation?

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2.3. **THE ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESS OF PUBLIC MEETINGS**

2.3.1. Briefly explain the process utilised within the COJ for inviting citizens to a public meeting

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2.3.2. Are you aware of the channels used by the city to convene public meetings? Are these methods relevant to the intended target audience?

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2.3.3. How is the response from citizens when invited for public meetings? How do citizens respond when they are in the meetings?

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2.3.4. What is the process of confirming that the citizens have received invitations to meetings?

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2.3.5. What is your view on the accessibility of venues and locations where public meetings are held?

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2.3.6. How is transport arrangements made for citizens to get to and participate in public meetings?

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2.3.7. Who sets the dates and times for conducting public meetings and generally how does this part of the process work?

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2.3.8. From your own observations, how would you rate/ assess the public participation process in the COJ in terms of efficiency and effectiveness?

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2.3.9. Do you think the COJ`s ward governance department has adequate resources and capacity to arrange public meetings?

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2.3.10. What is your understanding on the roles of ward councillors? Is there a space for improvement? What role do you think the Ward councillors can play in improving public participation process in the COJ?

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2.4. **POLICY IMPLEMENTATION**

2.4.1. Are you aware of the COJ GDS 2040 outreach strategy?

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2.4.2. Were you involved in the formulation of the GDS 2040 outreach strategy? Tell me what your role was (If you were involved)

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2.4.3. Do you feel your views were taken into consideration during the formulation of the GDS 2040 outreach strategy? Please explain

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2.4.4. Do you think this strategy contributed to public participation or not and how this has happened?

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2.4.5. What processes were followed in the formulation of the GDS 2040 outreach strategy with regards to public participation?

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.....

2.4.6. Do you think the GDS 2040 outreach strategy in the COJ is capable of achieving its objectives? Explain your answer

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……

2.4.7. Do you think citizens have a role in enhancing and improving policy on public participation?

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2.4.8. Having observed the city `s channels of communication to enhance public participation what other channels can you advise the city to consider to maximize participation?

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2.4.9. Do you think there are barriers in implementing the GDS 2040 outreach strategy, what are those barriers?

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2.4.10. In your experiences would you say the COJ adopts for public participation, top-down or bottom–top? Could you share with me why you say so?

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2.4.11. Do you believe there are some things that the COJ is doing right in terms of public participation and where do you think they need to improve?

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APPENDIX 2: DISCUSSION GUIDELINE FOR FOCUS GROUPS

Masters study in the School of Governance

Obstacles hindering citizens' participation in public meetings

Discussion guideline for focus group

INTRODUCTION

Good day, my name is Molly Netshimbolimbo I am a student at Wits School of Governance doing my Master`s degree. I also work for the City of Johannesburg and hope to help them understand through my study how citizens feel about the public participation events that the city organises. I would like to understand your current experiences within the City of Johannesburg of participation in the public meetings, the systems, processes and structures used to engage the citizens in participating in public meetings. In particular I would appreciate you sharing with me your views on and perceptions of the public meetings; what you see as the negative aspects or the obstacles hindering participation or the good aspects that might make you want to be engaged? Are there things you could suggest as ways to improve the process of public participation in public meetings of the City of Johannesburg?

Please remember when we have our discussion that there are no right or wrong answers. Whatever you say is important to me. It is also important that we speak one at a time. If you want to draw my attention, just raise your hand. With your permission I shall be recording the discussion so that I don't have to take notes while I listen to you. I shall appreciate it if you will speak up. I shall go back and listen to what you said when I write up the report and make recommendations to the City of Johannesburg. Please also note that your opinions will be confidential. We introduce ourselves here so that we can get to know one another and enjoy the discussion. However in writing my report I shall not be using any of your names.

Can we start by introducing ourselves and say a little bit about our lives and where we come from. I have worked for the City of Johannesburg for 8 years and I have been engaging with stakeholders and the community at large over time and in different forms. Whilst participating in public meetings I developed a passion to understand the experiences of citizens with regard to participating in public meetings that led to this research project.

MIND MAP: Public Meetings:

What are the things that are good and things that are bad about life in your communities at this time?

Guide to the facilitator: Test the citizen`s general understanding of public meetings; whether they have previously attended the public meeting or not and get respondents to say anything that comes to mind or that is important to them in terms of public participating in public meetings. Ideally all the themes below will actually emerge as they speak (structure of public meetings, the administration process of public meetings, policy implementation and suggestions for improvement). Underline these key themes and go back to them and discuss.

COJ public participation in public meetings issues

Overall perceptions

In this session we will focus on your overall attitudes towards public meetings, your perceptions and expectations, positive and negative. I shall also ask you about your most important needs with regard to the municipal matters and the expectations you have of the City of Johannesburg in exercising accountability through public participation processes.

Theme 1 - Structure of the public meetings

1.1. When last have you been to a public meeting? Was there anything you like or did not like about that public meeting? Let us talk about a few specific things that other people have mentioned about these meetings

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……

……

1.2. Thinking about the public meeting you have attended previously. Please tell me about the format of that public meeting in relation to the style of the presentation used.

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……..

1.3. What was the language or languages used in the public meeting?

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1.4. What do you think are the obstacles that stop people from your community from participating in public meetings that the city organises?

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……

1.5. At these meetings and also as the City organises these meetings, they send out people from local government, its officials to talk to the citizens. How would you describe the relationship between local government officials and the citizens in your community?

……

……

……

1.6. Let's take one round of first words that come to mind. Could you give me one word that best describes what you think of the officials and the work they try to do around these meetings? Now elaborate a little, please tell me briefly some of the reasons why you gave that description.

……

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……

1.7. Do you think this relationship makes people more or less willing or more or less interested, to participate in these meetings?

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……

1.8. What would you say is the biggest reason why you or perhaps other people like you participate in public meetings that the City organises?

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……

1.9. Are there community organisations that also get involved in this process of public participation? Could you help me get an idea of who these organisations are? Do they have names?

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……

1.10. What are the ways in which they become involved? Please tell me more about this. Do you think they help build participation or do they not really make a difference?

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……

Theme 2 - The administrative process of public meetings

2.1. Briefly tell me about the process that the COJ uses when they invite the people in your community to public meetings? How would you describe the response from citizens towards invitations to public meetings?

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……

2.2. What is your view on the methods of public participation currently used by the COJ in terms of their relevance to the target audience?

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2.3. How does the COJ go about to confirm that the people in the community have received invitations to meetings?

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2.4. How accessible (meaning conveniently located) are the venues and locations where public meetings are held?

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2.5. Are transport arrangements put in place to help people get to these meetings? Please tell me how these arrangements are made and what they are. Are these arrangements good or can you give me a few ideas on how to improve them?

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……

2.6. About the dates and times for meetings are you aware of who sets the dates and times for conducting the city`s public meetings?

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2.7. About the resources and capacity of the city `s ward governance department do you think they are able to arrange public meetings using the resources and staff members they currently have?

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……

2.8. Are you aware of the ward councillors within your wards? Do you know who they are? What role do you think the ward councillors can play in improving public participation processes in the COJ?

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Theme 3 - Policy implementation

3.1. Are you aware of any COJ Policy that spells out what form public participation should take in this municipality?

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3.2. Have you ever been involved in discussions around policy implementation in the COJ?

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3.3. Do you think citizens should be engaged when the COJ introduces and implements policies? Please also tell me why you think this way?

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……

3.4. What do think are the barriers for people within your communities that prevent people from participation?

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3.5. Have you ever heard of the leadership approach of ruling from top-down or bottom-up? What approach do you think the COJ adopts for public participation, top-down or bottom-up?

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……

Theme 4 - Suggestions for improvements

4.1. If you personally could give the city advice on how to get citizens to be interested in becoming part of public participation events, what would you tell them? Let us make a quick list on this flip chart that I have next to me.

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……

Guide to the facilitator: Have paper sheets and ball pens available.

4.2. Now let me put these sheets with your lists up on the wall. Please tell me, which of these suggestions do you think is more important? Which one is the second most important? Which one is third? Which one is last?

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……..

Theme 5 - Closure

5.1. Are there any other issues important to participating in public meetings in the City of Johannesburg that you would like to put on the table?

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……

I thank you for participating in the focus group and be assured that the information you have shared with the group will remain confidential and will not be shared outside of this room without your consent, Thank you.

APPENDIX 3: PARTICIPANTS CONSENT FORMS

Introduction

Hello, my name is Molly Netshimbolimbo. I am currently studying towards a Master of Management by Dissertation degree at the University of Witwatersrand.

What I am Doing

I am conducting research on the factors that citizens consider as obstacles for public participation in public meetings: A case study in the City of Johannesburg.

Your participation

I am asking that you allow me to conduct one interview with you about your knowledge, understandings and opinions. It will take a maximum of an hour for you to participate in the interview. For me to get the exact response you gave I will request to record our conversation by tape. You are also reminded that participating in this study will be voluntary and that you should feel free to discontinue if you are no longer comfortable and this may not be harmful to you in any way.

Confidentiality

Any study records that identify you will be kept confidential to the extent possible by law. The records from your participation may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including members of my university faculty (All of these people are required to keep your identity confidential.) Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records. The information you provide will not be published unless you give your specific permission in writing at the end of this consent form. All identifying information will be kept in a locked file cabinet and will not be available to others. We will refer to you by a code number or pseudonym (another name) in any publication.

Benefits

There are no immediate benefits to you from participating in this study. However, this study will be extremely helpful to me in developing a research report that will add to current aspects and thoughts on the factors that you consider as obstacles for public participation in public meetings. If you would like to receive feedback on our study; I will record your contact details separately on a separate sheet of paper and can send you the results of the study when it is completed sometime after February 2017.

Whom to contact if you have been harmed or have any concerns

This research has been approved by the University of the Witwatersrand. If you any complaints about ethical aspects of the research or feel that you have been harmed in any way by participating in this study, please call the School of Governance at the University of Witwatersrand. If you have concerns or questions about the research you may call the Course Convener, Dr Horacio Lucas Zandamela at +27 11717 3692.

CONSENT FORM

I hereby agree to participate in research on the factors that citizens consider as obstacles for public participation in public meetings: A case study in the City of Johannesburg. I understand that I am participating freely and without being forced in any way to do so. I also understand that I can stop participating at any point should I not want to continue and that this decision will not in any way affect me negatively.

I understand that this is a research project whose purpose is not necessarily to benefit me personally in the immediate or short term.

I understand that my participation will remain confidential.

..... ……..

Signature of participant Date

I hereby agree to the tape-recording of my participation in the study.

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Signature of participant Date……