

A MODEL FOR ENHANCED FUNCTIONALITY OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES AS HUBS OF INFORMATION FOR RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: MUTALE CASE STUDY

BY

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ABSTRACT

Providing access to knowledge and connecting it to the needs of individuals as well as grassroots community have always been at the centre of the mission and purpose of public libraries. Numerous studies conducted in various parts of the world have shown that public libraries are the anchor of the lives of communities where they are established. These studies have revealed that information needs may not be the same for different age groups and for different genders. For that reason many countries have been investing in the establishment of community libraries. In South Africa, a community libraries conditional grant was introduced in 2007 to build capacity for public libraries through building additional libraries and renovating existing ones so that they provide information that will satisfy information needs of all community members. However, there are still concerns about the functionality of public libraries and need to strengthening their capacity so that they adequately address community information.

This study was conducted on rural community libraries in Mutale located in the Vhembe District of Limpopo Province, South Africa. The main objective was to develop a model for enhanced functionality of public libraries for rural community development. The study was conceptualized around the ecological framework (Asselin and Doiron, 2014). The specific objectives were: to identify challenges faced by the library in providing services to adults, youth and children: to establish if information needs of adults, youth and children varied due to age, and to assess the level of satisfaction of adults, youth and children with the services of the local public library. The study used an exploratory sequential mixed method design with the qualitative phase preceding the quantitative phase. The qualitative phase had two phases. In the first, phase fourteen key informants were purposefully selected and engaged in face-to-face interviews as well as one focus group. Qualitative data from this phase were analysed using atlas.ti version 8. Results distilled showed that the library was hampered by centralized library services which were run from the district level, insufficient funding, inadequate library operating hours and lack of ICT support.

In the second phase, a total of 150 adults, youth and children were purposefully selected and engaged in face-to-face interviews as well as focus group discussions. An interview guide complimented by camera, and voice recorder were used to collect data from the respondents. Atlas ti version 8 was used to analyse the data. The results showed that information needs of the community were not fully met by provisions in the library. A variety of information resources expected to satisfy the needs of adults, youth and children respectively include increased number

of computers with internet connection, extended library opening hours including Saturdays , stakeholder engagement to be recognized, the extensive marketing of the library for it to be used by the community and the need to improve the amenities and library infrastructure.

Results obtained in the qualitative phase of the study informed the second quantitative phase . During this phase, an evaluative survey was conducted with adults, youth and children. Convenience and snowballing techniques were used to sample 176 respondents. A questionnaire with a Likert-type ranking scale was used to collect data. The International Business Machines, Statistical Product and Service Solutions (IBM SPSS) version 24 was used to analyse the data. Chi Square and Crammer's V tests were performed on the data.

It was established that more female (59%) than male (41%) respondents used the library. Of the respondents engaged 26% o were children; 30% were youth and 55% were adults. In terms of travelling to access the library services 32% of the respondents travels less than two kilometers while 68% travel more than two kilometers. This indicates that the majority of the users have a challenge of accessing the library due to distance. The majority of the respondents (70%) did not use the library frequently, with only 30% being active library users. Significant differences in accessing library services were observed according to age in terms of "Current books on all subjects", "Major reference works such as Encyclopaedias and dictionaries", "Books on arts and crafts", "Audio-visual materials" and "Electronic databases". No significant differences according to gender were observed on all aspects on availability of materials except for "Children's materials". Only the perception on availability of "Current books on all subjects" showed a moderate relationship across age (based on the Cramer's V value $>.3$). However, on all the aspects where the results showed an association by age and gender the relationship was deemed weak as demonstrated by Cramer' V values ($<.3$).

Generally, all the respondents (adults, youth and children) were not satisfied with the ICTs, availability of information and available services and amenities. Chi-square tests showed no significant associations between age and perceptions on ICT resources of an ideal library, available services, available amenities, marketing of library services, availability of materials in the library and type of information needed to make informed decisions.

These results imply that for the library to provide unhindered services, there must be an enabling environment for the smooth running of the library. There is a need for government to review the

policy of running the libraries from districts, as this negatively impacts on opening hours, acquisitions of materials and ICTs support. The library needs to do a periodic survey of the information needs of the community so that it responds by providing relevant and current resources. The study proposed a conceptual model that will enhance the functionality of libraries and to enhance their capacity to offer better services to their users. The proposed model is anchored on nine broad areas which are strengthening human resources, funding, access and accessibility, partnerships, infrastructure, ICTs, management, stakeholder consultation and periodic users' surveys. Thus, if these interventions are heeded to, there is a higher possibility that the library will be more functional and better positioned to close the information gap.

The study contributes to the body of knowledge through provision of a conceptual model which highlights factors that hamper smooth provision of library services, and offers pillars (components of the model) that can enhance the functionality of public libraries in rural areas. It further contributes by highlighting those services regard by users to be important for maximal usage of libraries. This study was unique in that as at the time of completion according to the investigator's knowledge no other study on rural public libraries has looked into the functionality of libraries funded by the conditional grant using a variety of methods, different perspectives through engaging key informants, factoring in the different age groups and bringing in the gender perspective in a single study. Use of different computer assisted software packages (Atlas ti version 8 and SPSS version 24) over and above the thematic content analysis to analyse the data was also unique as most other known studies only used thematic content analysis for their qualitative data.

Based on the findings it was concluded that decentralized services to local municipal level could reduce many of the challenges that hinder libraries from providing smooth and quality services to their communities. Improved materials collections to satisfy individual and communal information needs, user friendly opening hours as well as engaging the community in library decisions could go a long way in ensuring the library is recognized as a community development hub that fulfills its mission of keeping the community informed. It was therefore recommended that the policy on the running of public libraries should be reviewed with the view to decentralize the running of public libraries to local municipalities,. More still, policy on library funding should be reviewed, library opening hours should be extended, better trained ICT technicians should be placed in local libraries, librarians should be appointed on a permanent basis, and a comparative study of all

libraries in Vhembe should be conducted to gauge if the community is deriving any benefits from the provision of computers and access to the internet through “Mzansi Online” project.

Keywords: Challenges, community libraries conditional grant, conceptual model, Information needs, rural public libraries; scholarship, user satisfaction

DECLARATION

I, Tsedzeni Annah Matodzi, hereby declare that this thesis for the Doctor of Philosophy in Rural Development (PhDRDV) submitted to the Institute for Rural Development, School of Agriculture at the University of Venda has not been submitted previously for any degree at this or another university. It is original in design and in execution, and all reference material contained therein has been duly acknowledged.

Signature _____ Date _____

T.A Matodzi

Signature _____ Date _____

Prof J Francis

Signature _____ Date _____

Dr M Mwale

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort: who made it possible for me to finish this work.

2 Cor 1:2

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DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS

Conference presentations

T.A. Matodzi, J. Francis and M. Mwale. “Creating a user-friendly public library for combating information poverty in a rural area of South Africa” presented at the 2nd UNIVEN/WSU International Conference, 5-7 October 2016, Polokwane: UNIVEN/WSU.

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Community feedback

Three community feedback sessions are planned. One for government officials, another for librarians, cleaners and security guards, and the third one for the community.

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ABBREVIATIONS

A2I	Access to Information
ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
AFLIA	African Federation of Library Institutions and Associations
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CILIP	Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals
CIMS	Common Impact Measurement System
DAC	Department of Arts and Culture
GL	Global Libraries Initiatives
IAP	International Advocacy Program
IBM (SPSS) Solutions	International Business Machines, Statistical Product and Service Solutions
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
IFLA	International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transvestite
LIASA	Library and Information Association of South Africa
NCLIS	National Council for Library and Information Services
NDP	National Development Plan
NPC	National Planning Commission
NPO	Non-Profit making Organisation
QDA	Qualitative Data Analysis
SC	Stakeholder Consultation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TASCHA	Technology and Social Change Group
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNHR	United Nations Human Rights Council

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

A public library can be regarded as a hub of knowledge and dynamic social institution. It serves as an indispensable resource centre that provides reliable information to those who need it. Scholars such as Mnkeni-Saurombe & Zimu (2013) and Ejedafiru (2015) regard it as a gateway to information and powerful entity that drives development, particularly in rural communities. Moreover, a public library can be viewed as a centre for learning, innovation and creativity (Nyana, 2009), implying that it is a key and strategic partner for sustaining the educational, economic and civic health of a community.

Public funds are used to establish and maintain public libraries, and are invariably embedded in government-established infrastructure (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions: IFLA, 2003). The libraries change people's lives through meeting informational and recreational needs of the people in communities regardless of age, sex, nationality, religion, language status, political affiliation and educational status (Saur, 2001; Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals: CILIP, 2011; Abu, 2014). Libraries therefore, should ensure that their collections and services are best suited to the needs of the communities they serve.

Increasingly, public libraries are moving from being repositories of books and other printed materials to platforms of learning, collaboration and participation (Ugokwe, 2013). They are proving to be platforms for knowledge creation and sharing, with considerable implications for how they make provision for technological gadgets and creative spaces (Lankes, 2012; Roswell *et al.*, 2016). Flaherty (2016) identifies some of the innovative initiatives in public libraries today as maker space movement and training of users to be digitally literate. This helps libraries to evolve from being mere repositories to community hubs. Training enables users to create and innovate on their own or in groups at the library and using in-built facilities.

Public libraries are lauded as “the people's library” (Joy, 2014). Collections and services are developed to meet the current, emerging and future needs of the local community (IFLA/United

Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation: UNESCO, 1994). Activities carried out in libraries boost non-formal education and promote extended literary competencies for both young and old people (Ramos & Vila, 2015). Thus, public libraries should be resourced such that every citizen's information needs are well-catered for. This ensures that the community is empowered with information and makes them better able to drive development through creating and sharing it as they utilize free library resources.

There are 320 000 public libraries in the world. Most of them are positioned to equip local communities with requisite skills to access and utilize information that meets people's needs (Koonts & Gubbin, 2010). For this reason, libraries are critical entities in the digital age. It is crucial to point out that residence of rural areas need information to promote and preserve their cultural heritage, improve their education and acquire job-related skills, identify employment opportunities, make informed decisions about health-related issues and access government information, in general (Ideiegbeyan-ose, 2015). Krolak (2006) points out that this information is necessary because it helps communities to acquire education, and become better informed and equal players in the global community. Governments demonstrate their relevance to rural communities through providing them with requisite information.

Public libraries are deemed superior for delivery of highly personalized services than other channels of communication such as print and electronic media (Abu, 2014). Timely and relevant information can bring development through ensuring equity and empowerment, especially to the rural poor (Gebremichael & Jackson, 2006; Sung & Sirah-Blatchford, 2014). It is possible that this can translate to national development (Abubaker 2010; Mtega 2010; Musingafi & Chiwanza 2012; Kabamba, 2015). This implies that libraries should be at the forefront of providing information in their communities, particularly as they offer their services free of charge. Strategic partnerships with other developmental agencies could also benefit the community more than if each entity stood on its own.

Ugokwe (2013) projects the importance of providing information in capacity building and empowering communities. He argues that poor access to information is one of the major structural causes of poverty. Abubaker (2010) supports this sentiment, contending that lack of

access to information services is also a form of poverty which often manifest itself in to the form of low or no income. Other scholars (Chigbu, 2013; Hoq, 2014) posit that failure to cater for the information requirements of rural communities' stunts development. Thus, an appropriate information delivery mechanism is needed so that it helps facilitate development (Mbambo-Thata, 2014). Therefore, it is not surprising that 21st century libraries have emerged as the appropriate enablers of development. The libraries offer free resources and services for individual enrichment and to groups for communal development.

Public libraries are found in both developed and developing countries. For instance, there are 65 000 public libraries in Europe (Yusop *et al.*, 2013). Communities that access the libraries empower and develop themselves in various ways. It is reported (IFLA, 2010) that approximately, 100 million people visit European libraries every year and about 4.1 million people visit the libraries to gain access to the internet. Internet activities that some users engage in are employment-related, with 1.5 million applying for a job online (Yosop *et al.*, 2013) Each year, almost 250 000 people secure jobs through utilising local public library facilities (IFLA, 2010).

In Bangladesh, provision of informal education through public libraries helps communities acquire literacy skills (Hoq, 2014). The activities in public libraries include computer training and provision of local information through brochures and displays. Information is also provided orally and cultural programmes are run at the public libraries. In the United States of America, there are about 16 550 public libraries, with 136 850 service staff. According to IFLA (2010), there are approximately 3 100 libraries in Canada for a population of 33 487 208 as opposed to 50 serving 83 082 869 Egyptians; 37 in Nigeria for 41 048 532 people; and only 12 in Lesotho that serve the 2 130 819 Basotho. This shows that there are disparities in information provisions amongst developed and developing countries, with the latter still very much under-resourced in terms of both collections and human resources. This implies that rural communities continue to be marginalized, a situation which continues to stunt their development.

In South Africa, public libraries continue to fail to meet community expectations, in particular in rural areas. There are approximately 1 990 (1 610 provincial/380 metro) public libraries in the country (Satgoor, 2015). This constitutes only 35 % of the total number required to meet the

needs of the people in the country. Apart from this, allocation of the libraries among the country's provinces is skewed (Nkondo *et al.*, 2014). For instance, it is estimated that there is an 85 % shortfall of libraries in Limpopo Province compared to 18 % in the Eastern Cape. Nkondo *et al.* (2014) also reveals that South Africa has 3 libraries/million people and yet the recommended ratio for the country is 1/10 000 households. This shortcoming was also uncovered in the KPMG report (2006), in which it was revealed that developed nations have 216 public libraries per million people, while in South Africa the ratio was 30 public libraries for 1 million people.

According to the National Library of South Africa (NLSA, 2013), there are only 74 community libraries in Limpopo Province. Seven of the libraries are found in Vhembe District that are located in the local Municipalities. There are two each in Makhado, Musina, and Thulamela Local Municipalities. Prior to the disbanding of Mutale Local Municipality, there was one public library in it. Mutale public library opened in 2014 (Mutale Local Municipality, 2014). A second library was set to be established in the area by 2020 (Mutale Local Municipality, 2014). The library located in the former Mutale Local Municipality was the most rural in Vhembe district. After the disbanding of Mutale Local Municipality, the library is now located in Thulamela.

In this study, it was necessary to solicit the views of adults, youth and children in order to get their perceptions of the current library service provisions. Including both genders and all age groups was necessary because the resultant framework had to take into account perceptions across these variables. Basing the framework on the prevalence of perceptions by proxy would undermine the rights of children and youth for instance, if these were only represented by adults. Again, since the constitution guarantees right to access to information, all segments of the community should inform the what, who, why and when of the information to be accessed.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

Despite government efforts to improve access to information in remote areas through establishing public libraries, most rural communities still have limited access, which is coupled with insufficient and irrelevant information for the users (Satgoor, 2015). Fully functioning public libraries are acknowledged as powerful and strategic entities that play a pivotal role in providing information for development to people, in particular those in rural communities (Islam & Ahmed, 2012;

Ejedafiru, 2015). However, not all rural dwellers have access to standard public libraries that satisfy their information needs. Available libraries are often said to be not strategically located, which makes them fail to satisfy the information needs of communities they are supposed to service. Limited access, irrelevant and limited resources are some of the major challenges associated with public libraries (Schrag *et al.*, 2015). Abubaker 2010), Hoq (2014), Mamafha & Ngulube (2014) and Bopape *et al.* (2017) argue that libraries lack resources such as books and internet that adequately and appropriately support the intended users.

The South African government has made efforts to mitigate the shortcomings cited above through the “Conditional grant for community and public libraries” (Zimu & Mnkeni-Saurombe, 2011; NLSA, 2014). At the centre of this drive is the Department of Arts and Culture (DAC), which is the custodian of public libraries. The Mutale library was one of the products of this initiative and started operating in 2014. Since its inception, no scientific studies have been conducted to build an understanding of the issues that determine its functional integrity. Thus, this study was carried out with the aim of identifying the impediments to providing reliable services to the satisfaction of the local community and find out if user needs were being met. It was also found necessary to assess the level of satisfaction with the services being rendered. All this was done in order to make suggestions for an improved model of a public library with the potential to enhance the ability of public libraries to serve as information hubs in rural areas.

1.3 Research Objectives and Questions

The aim of the current study was to develop a framework for enhanced functionality of public libraries for rural development. In Table 1.1, the specific objectives and related rationale of the study are presented. Below, the associated research questions are articulated:

1. To identify the attributes and challenges public libraries face in rendering services to children, youth and adults.
 - a) What are the strengths of the library?
 - b) What are the weaknesses of the library?
 - c) What changes should be effected to make the library more useful to users?

Table 1.1 Objectives of the study with respective rationale

Objective	Rationale
1. To determine challenges faced by the library in offering services to the community	Identify impediments to proper service provision and suggest remedial action
2. To determine if the type of information needed by the adults, youth and children varies according to age.	Find out specific information needs according to the various interest groups, namely adults, youth and children with a view to recommend targeted services.
4. To assess the level of satisfaction of adults, youth and children.	Assess the extent to which users and non-users of the library are satisfied with services of the library. Such information would help unravel what they really need from the library.

Source: author's own

2. To determine whether the type of information rural dwellers need for personal use and community development varies according to age.
 - a) What are the ideal characteristics of a public library?
 - b) Does the library meet users' needs?
 - c) What type of information is useful to users?
 - d) Is the information readily available?
 - e) What are the characteristics that a librarian should possess?
 - f) What can be done in order to have a library that adequately meets users' needs?

3. Assess the level of satisfaction of children, youth and adults with the services of the local public library.
 - a) Does the level of satisfaction of adults, youth and children differ according to age?
 - b) Do challenges adults, youth and children face in using local public library differ according to age?
 - c) Does the type of information adults, youth and children need for personal use and community development differ according to age?

1.4 Research Assumptions and Hypotheses

The following assumptions and hypotheses were tested in the current study.

Public libraries face challenges in providing services to adults, youth and children.

Type of information needed by adults, youth and children does not vary according to age.

Adults, youth and children are not satisfied with the rendering of library services.

1.5 Conceptual Framework of the Study

The ecological framework of Asselin & Doiron (2013) was adopted so that it guided the current study. It highlights the central role that libraries play in the quest for improvement of individuals and communities socially, culturally and economically. The framework can be seen as comprising "all the LIS institutions operating in South Africa at this point in time, all the relationships between them, all the features of politics, economics, and culture that affect them and the history of the country as well" (Nkondo *et al.*, 2014:20). Context/environment, equity/social justice,

partnerships/interactions and action/research are the components of the framework. The framework offers a holistic approach that librarians can use to develop strategies for information and service provision to their clientele.

No two libraries can ever be the same, irrespective of them being found either in urban or rural areas. Even if the same agent or government funds them, community needs of that particular library should still dictate the nature of information to be provided (Skinner, 2018). As far back as 1948, the United Nations' adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Mbambo-Thata, 2014), demonstrated the acknowledged importance of information as a necessary resource in development practice.

Local residents should have equal access to local libraries, well equipped with relevant information that satisfies their particular needs (Buschman, 2017; Widdersheim & Roizumi, 2017; Whitney & Keselman, 2017). This highlights the need for the librarian to determine the needs of the community through carrying out periodic assessments. Determining user satisfaction with service provision of the library guarantees that the needs of users are catered for and thus enhances the chances of the library being fully utilized.

The library should work in consonance with other developmental agencies in the region (Holt & Holt, 2010; Blodgett, 2017, Skinner, 2018). Libraries that operate in that way are often trusted and can easily partner with other agencies involved in promoting literacy such as schools (Racelis, 2018; Turner & Gonchanaz, 2018). Providing literacy resources at all proficiency levels contributes to a reading culture and ultimately precipitates a literate nation (UNESCO, 2016; Blodgett, 2017). Libraries often collect and collate resources of various agencies involved in development such as Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET), non-governmental organisations, donor bodies, public health and local government to provide a one-stop centre that satisfies the needs of the local populace (Asselin & Doiron, 2013). Forming partnerships with other agencies ensures that relevant information for development is made easily accessible and known to those who need it (Nassimbeni & Shabangu, 2013). If one component of the partnership is weak, it threatens the strength of the whole (Nkondo *et al.*, 2014). A strong partnership amongst all developmental agencies in a community is thus necessary to mitigate against poverty of

information in rural communities to ensure well-informed and knowledgeable populace. This in turn will work towards a developed community.

Shared vision amongst community leaders, civic partners and librarians enables the library to fulfil its role (Garner, 2014; Castek *et al.* 2017). This makes it easier for the library to act as a repository of information the agencies gather and make it available to the community. By so doing, it is possible that duplication of development endeavours can be avoided to some extent. Figure 1.1 shows how the public library can be a hub of a community's life and progress. As a hub of information for community development, the public library should support activities related to the improvement of the quality of life of the people. These include provision of relevant and timely information, training the community on how to use resources available in the library, in particular information and communications technologies (ICTs), and hosting community workshops and meetings.

1.7 Operational Definitions of Key Terms and Concepts

Information is an important resource necessary to participate in the twenty-first century. It can be regarded as accurate data that is timely, specific and organized for a particular purpose (Business dictionary online). The context within which it is presented should also be meaningful, relevant and bring an understanding to the recipient by removing uncertainty and act as an expedient for better decision making for positive outcomes.

Access to information refers to the rights and capacity to use, create and share information in ways that are meaningful to each individual, community or organization (IFLA/TASCHA, 2017). Accessibility can be viewed as the 'ability to access' the functionality, and benefits associated with libraries. This includes distance and transport, building design, assistive technology, relevant and usable content of resources, in suitable formats, and in the languages spoken by the staff (Nkondo *et al.*, 2015). Accessibility is also used to focus on people with disabilities and their right of access to library services.

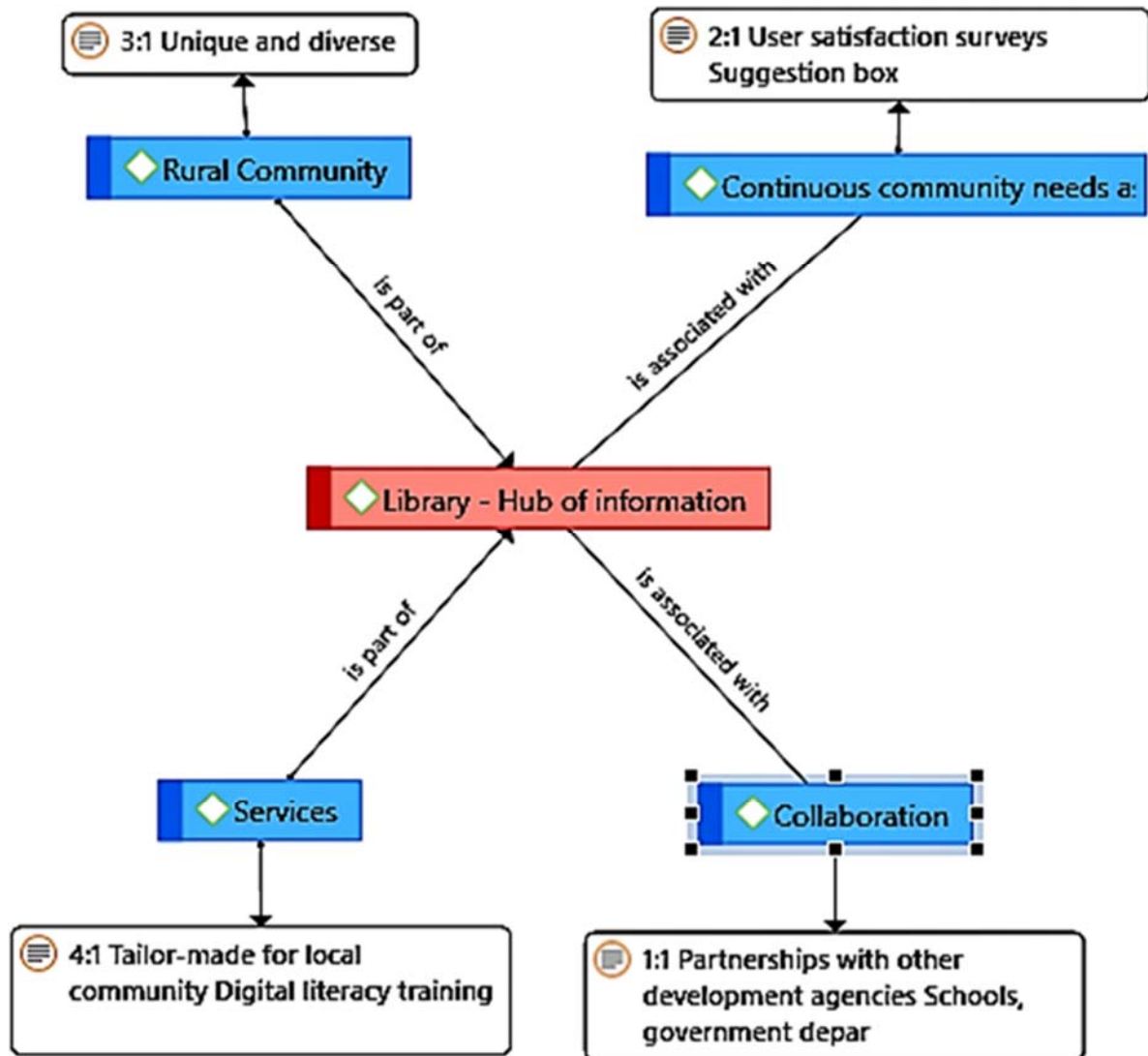


Figure 1.1 The ecological framework for enhancing the functionality of public library services in South Africa (adapted from Asselin & Doiron, 2013)

A *need* is something that is necessary for an organism to live a healthy life. There is a clear distinction between needs and wants; a want can be seen as “a nice to have” whereas an unfulfilled need can be detrimental to the functioning of an organism to the point where there might be a dysfunction or death. An *information need* is a concept that has assumed an everyday colloquial meaning although it evolved from a theory of information seeking. A 1962 definition by Taylor stated that an information need is the “process of asking questions”; highlighting four types of those questions that could be asked;

- a) The actual, but unexpressed need for information (the visceral need)
- b) The conscious, within-brain description of the need (the conscious need)
- c) The formal statement of the question (the formalized need)
- d) The question as presented to the information system (the compromised need). Hossain *et al.* (2017) view information need as a situation in a person’s mind, where they perceive a “gap” in information, and work towards an exigency to fill it.

There is no general agreed upon definition of what constitute “*rural*” but most scholars acknowledge that any area that is not classified as urban is rural. These areas are characterized by the sparsely populated areas in which people farm or depend on natural resources, including the villages and small towns scattered across these areas (Gopaul, 2006). Implicit in the definition is the fact that those areas are without access to ordinary public services such as water and sanitation and are without a formal local authority (Gopaul, 2006).

Community applied to all the dwellers of the Mutale under the Vhembe District, Limpopo Province, South Africa who are perceived to have the common challenge of unmet information needs

“A *public library* is an organization established, supported and funded by the community, either through local, regional or national government or through some other form of community organization. It provides access to knowledge, information and works of the imagination through a range of resources and services and is equally available to all members of the community regardless of race, nationality, age, gender, religion, language, disability, economic and employment status and educational attainment” (Saur, 2001:15).

Rural community development is a strategy encompassing different interventions that are tailored to improve the welfare and livelihoods of dwellers in rural areas. Nwokocha & Chimah (2016) define rural community development simply as “any noticeable movement out of a perceived stagnation”. In this research, the development related to information provision that impacts positively and brings about change in people’s lives.

Essentially, there are two types of definitions for the “customer (user) “satisfaction” concept, based on different approaches (IGI-Global Dictionary) online. The process-oriented approach considers consumer satisfaction as the difference between expected satisfaction and achieved satisfaction, whereas the outcome-oriented approach regards satisfaction as an attribute extracted from a product or service after its consumption. This implies that customer satisfaction is a concept that denotes how good users feel after visiting and using the library, their likeliness to return back to that library when next information is needed. That is, satisfaction of library services influences the use or non-use of the library services.

1.8 Outline of the Thesis

This thesis consists of six chapters. Chapter 1 gives the background and rationale underpinning the research. The problem for the research is articulated, highlighting the objectives and why it is justified. Research objectives, questions and theoretical framework are outlined. In Chapter 2, literature on public libraries that is relevant to the study focus is reviewed. Concepts such as information needs of rural communities, poverty of information, need for community needs survey and factors hindering the provision of information to rural communities are explained. Chapter 3 is devoted to an outline of how the study was carried out. The research design, methods and tools used to find answers to the objectives of the study are covered. Research models used, data collection and analysis procedures and tools are explained in detail. The findings of the study are presented and discussed in Chapters 4-5. The 6th Chapter is a synthesis of the findings of the entire study and showcases the framework being proposed for improved performance of public libraries.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the review of literature relating to the research objectives is presented. Studies and articles on challenges facing public libraries at international and national levels were reviewed. The following concepts relating to the study questions were reviewed: regulatory framework governing public libraries, international imperatives regulating public libraries, continental imperatives regulating public libraries, national imperatives governing public libraries, information needs of rural communities, poverty of information, digital divide, funding of public libraries, need for customer survey in relation to community need for information, libraries and access to information, how public libraries drive development worldwide and factors impeding rural libraries in providing services to their communities.

2.2. Regulatory Framework Governing Public Libraries

Public libraries are government entities entrusted with providing every citizen free access to information for personal and economic development useful developmental indices could be derived from services offered and how they operate in general (Edem *et al.*, 2014). There are international guidelines that although not binding, usually provide best practice and inform the running of public libraries. Working in unison with other similar institutions with similar circumstances ensures that services are benchmarked for the benefit of users (Blodgett, 2017; Skinner, 2018; Turner & Gonchanaz, 2018), since libraries will be able to gauge if they are offering relevant services or lagging behind other libraries in other countries.

Likewise, public libraries are also regulated by policies and legislation governing these institutions in their own countries (Lor, 2016). Access to information is an issue that underpins development policies globally (Leorke *et al.*, 2018). This is evident in the fact that it is prominently embedded in the sustainable development goals (SDGs) of the UN 2030 Agenda (IFLA, 2017; Wu *et al.*, 2018). Access to information is embedded in targets on ensuring public access to information, universal internet access, and international knowledge sharing, while also supporting targets related to improved health, education, economic and governance outcomes. This section offers an expose of some of the prominent initiatives regulating the operation of public libraries.

2.1.1 International Imperatives guiding public libraries services

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) is recognized as the leading international body guiding the activities of library and information services as well as their users (IFLA, 2003). It is a global voice of the library and information profession. IFLA is committed to work with 320,000 public libraries worldwide and more than 1 million parliamentary, national, university, science and research, school and special libraries to ensure that information and the skills to use it are available to all by 2030.

In an effort to guide public libraries IFLA/UNESCO Public Library Manifesto (1994) encapsulated how services should be offered in this statement; “services of the public library are provided on the basis of equality of access for all, regardless of age, race, sex, religion, nationality, language or social status.” In the same vein, The Lyon Declaration on Access to Information and Development is an advocacy document signed in Lyon, France in 2014 during the annual IFLA conference. It calls on global institutions and associations to “ensure that everyone has access to, and is able to understand, use and share information that is necessary to promote sustainable development and democratic societies (Garrido *et al.*, 2017).

The Lyon Declaration also informed SDGs 4, 16, and 17 whereby the agreement reached in 2014 was taken to the UN by IFLA to ensure that the voice of libraries is also heard and included in the formation of the SDGs. To this end, IFLA made a commitment to work with its 150 countries member states worldwide, including library associations and institutions in preparation to support implementation of the SDGs. The declaration also highlighted the importance of including ICTs in addition to other library services and programmes.

To monitor the progress on implementation of the SDGs the IFLA Advocacy Programme (IAP) was instituted. IAP is capacity building programme that supports inclusion of libraries in NDPs and demonstrates the contribution of libraries to the UN 2030 agenda by documenting evidence of developmental initiatives in different countries. The first report was out in 2016 (IFLA, 2016). To ensure that public libraries offer internet to their communities. The Global Libraries Initiative, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation facilitates supply of and sustaining of free public access to computers and free internet around the world (Sawaya, 2013). Programmes are customized to suit specific local community needs.

To advocate for the libraries' role in the developmental agenda IFLA launched a new Toolkit: Libraries, Development and the United Nations 2030 Agenda (Revised version - August 2017) to supersede "Toolkit: Libraries and implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda" of August 2015. With this plan, libraries will be able to advocate for inclusion into national and regional development plans of their respective countries with a view to meeting the global 2030 agenda (IFLA, 2017). The toolkit is aimed at enabling librarians understand what the SDGs/Agenda 2030 is all about; how it will be implemented at national level and in turn inform library users. Provision of vital information or knowledge should be considered a starting point in the transformative agenda of the SDGs and must be capitalized on to the fullest extent. When the library delivers information where it is needed the library serves as a development agent; this in addition to the traditional role of being a public institution (Bradley, 2016)

2.1.2 Continental Imperatives regulating public libraries

African Union Agenda 2063 - the Africa we want; is a strategic framework for the socio-economic transformation of the continent over the next 50 years. It builds on, and seeks to accelerate the implementation of past and existing continental initiatives for growth and sustainable development Ralebipi-Simela (2017). Librarians are actively involved in this initiative through active participation of library associations in collaboration with other continental agencies which are contributing to shaping the developmental efforts of Africa.

The Cape Town Declaration was a culmination of discussions around the recognition of the role that libraries play in development. The declaration was made during the annual IFLA congress which was held in Cape Town, 2015. Ministers and country representatives from Angola, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote D'voire, Lesotho, Guinea, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa, South Sudan, and Swaziland signed the declaration in support of providing the resources and enabling environment necessary to support the contribution of libraries in meeting the SDGs - in support of the Africa we want (IFLA, 2015; Bradley, 2016). The 17 SDGs and related targets are aimed at all spheres of development; with target 16:10 under goal 16 "*Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accord with national legislation and international agreement*" speaking directly to librarians. This makes the case for public libraries as pillars of sustainable development and improved lives of rural populace as librarians continue to give access to information as well as contributing to literate communities.

Key deliverables include; provision of the necessary resources for the development of African libraries to respond to modern day challenges and provide access to emerging technologies; fast-tracking of the implementation of continental innovative strategies to improve ICT and knowledge management; promotion of library policies on access to information as part of a universal human rights approach as well as the rights of people to knowledge; establishment of institutional partnerships between libraries in the continent for the exchange of knowledge and experiences, supporting the work of the African Federation of Library Institutions and Associations (AFLIA), National Libraries, National Library Services, National Library Associations and councils (IFLA, 2015). These commitments were fulfilled and documented in a report by IFLA in partnership with the Technical and Social Change Group funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The report underlines the contribution that access to information, and libraries as key providers of this, make to development (Garrido *et al.*, 2017).

2.1.3 National imperatives regulating public libraries

Access to information has long been acknowledged as a basic human right (Nkondo *et al.*, 2014; Garrido *et al.*, 2017). Chapter two of The Constitution enshrines “Access to information in section 32 of the Bill of Rights”. Access to information prompts other rights such as education (section 29) equality (Section 9) and many other rights. Undoubtedly, without access no meaningful democratic participation is possible and other rights are fundamentally compromised as a result (McKinley, 2017). Two bodies that serve the interests of South African Library and Information Services (LIS) across various systems are the National Council for Library and Information Services (NCLIS) and the Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA). The two bodies give leadership and provide a “focus of concerted action for the development of LIS for all” (Nkondo *et al.*, 2014).

Furthermore, the South African National Development Plan (NDP): A Vision for 2030, is a plan for the whole country to unite South Africans, unleash the energies of its citizens, grow an inclusive economy, build capabilities, and enhance the capability of the state and leaders working together to solve complex problems (National Planning Commission, 2012; Ralebepi-Simela, 2017). At its core is the aim to accord all South Africans a decent standard of living through the elimination of poverty and reduction of inequality by 2030. Libraries have the potential to serve and engage the entire community through targeted outreach programmes, making them good

partners with the government to engage information-deprived communities by providing services which can improve people's lives.

Aligned to the NDP is the Library and Information Services Transformation Charter (Nkondo, 2014), which was spearheaded by Department of Arts and Culture – DAC, National Library of South Africa (NLSA) and National Council of Library and Information Service (NCLIS). The charter aims to ensure that the vision of an informed nation is realized and is rooted in the Freedom Charter and the Constitution. It is informed by recommendations based on extensive consultations with all stakeholders in the nine provinces.

In order to ensure access to high quality public library services by all citizens DAC (2013) commissioned the drafting of The South African Public Library and Information Services Bill. The bill serves as a framework of essential national norms and standards for the delivery of public library and information services in the country and is being implemented after acceptance of its 7th draft (Satgoor, 2015). With the advent of technology and its crucial role in providing a mechanism for communities to develop themselves, Mzansi Libraries On-Line is another initiative that is rolled out nationwide to empower South African communities to improve their lives through the provision of free access to vibrant library spaces, technologies and services (DAC, 2013). It is envisaged that through this initiative, both young and old citizens will capitalize on technology provided for by the government at public libraries to improve their lives. Table 2 1 summarises these imperatives.

Table 2.1 Regulatory framework guiding public libraries

International Imperatives	
International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA)	Global voice of libraries
Lyon Declaration on Access to Information and Development	Advocacy
IFLA Advocacy Programme (IAP)	Capacity building programme documenting evidence of developmental initiatives in different countries
Global Libraries Initiative	Facilitates free public access to computers and free Internet around the world
Toolkit Libraries and Implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda of August 2015	Enables libraries to advocate for inclusion into national and regional developmental plans of respective countries
Continental Imperatives	
African Union Agenda 2063 – “The Africa we want”	Strategic framework for socio-economic transformation of the continent over the next 50 years
The Cape Town Declaration 2015	Support for enabled environment for libraries contributing to SDGs
African Federation of Library Institutions and Associations (AFLIA)	Trusted voice of the African library and information community in Africa’s development
National Imperatives	
The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996	Enshrines Access to Information and the Bill of Rights
National Council for Library and Information Services	Serves interests of South African LIS
Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA)	Professional body serving the interest of South African LIS
LIS Transformation Charter	Vision for an informed nation
NDP vision 2030	Calls for one library one librarian
South African Public Library and Information Services Bill 2013	Framework of essential national norms and standards for Public library information services
Mzansi Online	Provision of free access to technology and services facilitated by dynamic librarians.

Source: Authors’ own

2.2 Information Needs of Rural Communities

Information needs of rural communities are as diverse as the rural dwellers. The public library has a duty to dispel all forms of ignorance in the community it serves through disseminating correct information (Greenberg & Blake, 2018; Mittal & Padmaja, 2018). Certain information can be crucial to rural communities as in the case of health; where timely information can potentially save lives by educating the community on how to prevent or manage health-related issues. Librarians do not restrict their services by factors such as socioeconomic status or level of education (Osuigwe & Jiagbogu, 2015). Rather, they provide sector-specific information for their entire communities such as agriculture, education, cultural, health.

Needs of rural communities also include specialized services for the aged, infirmed, incarcerated, physically impaired, e-government services encompassing online birth registrations, forms for employment and other services, online university admissions, printing and photocopying services, and video conferencing (Nayak *et al.*, 2010; Hoq 2014). Schrag *et al.* (2015) states that information needs of different groups in rural communities can be better expressed as the impact that public libraries are having on users' lives. Table 2.2 showcases the diverse rural information needs broadly classified and expressed in a framework that showcases seven issue areas (Schrag *et al.*, 2015). Schrag *et al.* (2015) further state that grantee countries came up with a Common Impact Measurement System (CIMS), which is now in use as a standard to gauge the impact public libraries have on their respective users.

The needs of rural communities pertain to everyday information needed to function on a day to day basis such as news of the local community, information on the rand exchange rate and also the weather (Mittal & Padmaja, 2018; Wu *et al.*, 2018). The library can have all this information in the library through provision of free newspapers (local, national and international). Authoritative information on education, health, governance and government information can be accessed also through the local library. Free and reliable internet access ensures that the community has information via the net, even though it might not be available on books which are/not in the library. This is particularly necessary in rural communities since they tend to be under-funded and under-supplied with current books on all subjects (Bopape *et al.*, 2017).

Table 2.2. Broad measurement systems for rural community information needs

Information Need	Description
Digital inclusion	Access to online resources via public computers. Libraries provide free internet and wifi hotspots. Users can be trained on a variety of technology-based trainings. Users can thus be able to perform basic activities such as taming a mouse, setting up an email account or searching for all kinds of information online.
Culture and Leisure	Dedicated spaces for cultural and leisure activities are a requirement in public libraries in order to encourage the community to preserve their culture while also enjoying other recreational activities. In this way, libraries help the community to come together.
Education	Libraries support the literacy of the community by providing relevant resources from basic to advanced information to support education at all levels of development including informal education.
Communication	Resources provided in the library helps the community to stay connected with others particularly through use of online resources such as email, blogs, facebook and different websites.
Economic Development	Vast amounts of information available in the library can assist up and coming entrepreneurs to develop themselves. The library provides all the relevant resources targeting the various interest groups including business.
Health	Inclusive entry point for the community to access health information that is relevant and reliable. The community is thus able to use the information to manage their health meaningfully. Libraries can work with other cross-sector partners to ensure health literacy for individual and communal development
Government and governance	Communities access critical government information through free access via public libraries computers. Libraries ensure guaranteed access to e-government services as this is the primary means of interacting with government today.

Source: Schrag et al. (2015)

2.3 Poverty of Information, Digital Divide: Two Sides of the Same Coin?

The idea that different levels of knowledge exist among people of a particular community or amongst different countries has long been a subject of inquiry among different researchers. Britz (2013) asserts that information poverty affects anyone irrespective of where they are from. In other words, information poverty is a global phenomenon, and its elimination or reduction is instrumental to survival in today's information age. Most importantly, skills, understanding, ability to use and assign meaning to information are necessary expedients to the improvement of quality of life (Britz, 2013).

As far back as 1948, the United Nations (UN) acknowledged the importance of Information as a necessary resource in development through the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Mbambo-Thata, 2014). Broadly defined, information poverty speaks to the inequalities in the access to information and communication technologies (Haider & Bawden, 2007). Barja & Gigler (2007) state that poverty is characterized by lack of the basic capabilities necessary to participate in the information society. The information society is characterized by its reliance on timely information which aids informed decision-making and facilitates production and productivity (Haider & Bawden 2007; Mbambo-Thata, 2014).

Haider & Bawden (2007) further assert that certain groups tend to be associated with “lack” of information. These groups that tend to be vulnerable include women, rural people, homeless, ethnic minorities, unemployed and individual as well as homogenous developing countries (Nayak *et al.*, 2010; Hoq, 2014). Ugokwe (2013) acknowledged this “information gap” and pointed out that as more information enters a society the gap gets wider and wider. Sadly, the gap does not only speak to disparities amongst countries but is also apparent amongst groups and individuals within countries (IFLA, 2003). This is the reason Barja & Gigler (2007) state that pro-poor vision and policies should complement the constructs of the information society; this will in turn ensure equality and social inclusion.

Today, societies increasingly depend on knowledge-intensive activities where technology permeates most aspects of daily living (Sheik, 2017; Cecchini, 2018; Mittal & Padmaja, 2018). However, knowledge distribution across populations is increasingly stratified by age, education, location, access and gender (Gray *et al.*, 2017; Sheik, 2017; Greenberg & Blake, 2018). According to Sheik (2017), digital divide can occur in different ways; such as internally – when

some people are digitally empowered and others are digitally poor. A cultural gap also exists between Anglo-Saxon culture and other countries; there is also a gap that is worsened by disparities in access to information between rich and poor nations (Gangadharan, 2017; Nyahodza & Higgs, 2017). Yet again, the emergence of what has been termed the “digerati”, defined as the rich elite who have requisite skills for technology and the related industries, and are characterized by obsessing about top of the range technological gadgets has widened this gap (Sheik, 2017).

Factors militating against digital access for vulnerable groups are infrastructure (which can be exacerbated by the inability of the marginalized communities to keep pace with technological advances); literacy and skills (which are necessary to navigate the digital platforms), economic barriers (poorer people will always prioritize subsistence over internet connection), content and language barriers (where English is not a primary language for all people), (Grimes, 2000; Sung & Siraj-Blatchford, 2014; Noland & Parore, 2017; Sheik, 2017). Digital divide-addressing initiatives are hampered by lack of support and the costly cost of establishing ICTs in marginalized communities particularly at the initial stages if funding is exhausted (Noland & Parore, 2017; Roswell *et al.*, 2017). Also telecommunications providers are loath to provide services in rural areas as some of these areas are located in mountainous areas where funders do not have a defined customer revenue base to justify their investment (Noland & Parore, 2017).

Africa has a population of 1 287 914 329; 453 329 534 internet users; a 10.9 % internet penetration and 35.2 % which accounts for only 10.3 % of the world’s internet usage (Internet World Stats, 2014). According to the World stats website, what today is known as the digital divide (a social issue referring to the differing amount of information between those who have access to the Internet - especially broadband access - and those who do not have) is but one aspect of information poverty. In a 2011 report to the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) by the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression, internet was declared a fundamental enabler of human rights. National governments in some countries (Spain, Greece, Costa Rica, Finland, France, Estonia and South Africa) have taken note and formally incorporate internet access as a human right in their national development plans

South Africa remains a dual economy where a large number of previously disadvantaged communities still suffer from the triple scourge of poverty, inequality and unemployment – many of whom live in poorly/under- resourced rural areas (40%, according to figures cited in the National

Development Plan [National Planning Commission/NPC, 2012]). This development, in the context of public libraries, translates to digital exclusion – defined in the South African context as insufficient free online access to ICT, information and resources, particularly amongst communities regarded as previously disadvantaged, due to the pernicious legacy of apartheid Nkondo *et al.* (2014).

2.4 Funding of Public Libraries in South Africa

Funding is a major challenge when it comes to the running of public libraries worldwide. In South Africa, there seems to be a general confusion regarding the responsibility of funding of libraries (Nkondo, 2014; Bopape, 2017). Part A of schedule 5 of the Constitution of The Republic of South Africa declares public libraries as a provincial competency. Previously, public libraries were provided for by local authorities in conjunction with provinces, to cater for infrastructure-related activities as well as staffing matters. Legislation is silent as to who should fund what specifically and this has a negative impact on service and infrastructure maintenance and development. The hardest hit by this oversight is libraries in the rural areas where the previous apartheid regime's spatial planning is still affecting service provision to these areas (Satgoor, 2015).

However, there is a shift to addressing the funding of libraries through the rolling out of the “Conditional grant for public and community libraries”, with an initial cash injection of 1 billion over 3 years rolled out to build new libraries and renovate existing ones in all of the nine provinces (Nkondo, 2014; Satgoor, 2015; Bopape, 2017). The funds are also meant for the acquisition of materials as well as the improvement and introduction of other services to benefit the communities. Nkondo (2014) points out that the grant also brought on some problems, with six provinces reducing library funding due to the conditional grants.

In 2013-14 DAC was awarded a grant by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to fund a pilot project of 27 libraries “to strengthen the provision of access to information, technologies and relevant training in selected public libraries (SADAC, 2014). Also in 2013-14 National Treasury awarded DAC R597 786 000 to transform infrastructure, facilities and services in both urban and rural public/community libraries. Previously disadvantaged communities (rural, townships) were targeted through recapitalized programmes at provincial level in support of local government and

national initiatives (DAC, 2014). Clearly there is a concerted effort by the government to build capacity in local public libraries so rural communities and other previously under-served communities can derive benefits of using the functionality of libraries. A clear and sustained funding system particularly at local municipality level is thus needed to keep the management of libraries smooth and efficient.

2.4 Need for Customer Survey in Relation to Community Need for Information

There is a paradigm shift with regards to how the relationship between library services and local communities is viewed (Huysmans & Oomes, 2013). Libraries can no longer prescribe to the community what services are relevant (Skinner, 2018). Participation of the stakeholders is key in deciding what provisions have to be made taking into account the information developmental needs of the communities served. To this end, Mtega (2010; Hussain, & Jan, 2018; Bashir, et al, 2018) recommends having regular rural information needs assessment before providing information services to rural areas. One of the reasons stated for abject poverty in rural areas include poor information facilities and access (Mbatha & Lesame, 2013; Delelo & McWhorter, 2017)). To improve usage, information should be relevant, usable, packaged in appropriate forms that can be easily accessed by users and also marketed to the community so they know what is available.

Many studies have been conducted in various parts of the world to determine the needs of library users (Aslam & Seher, 2017; Hussain & Jan, Isaac, *et al.*, 2018 2018; Yeboah, 2018). These includes research undertaken in rural areas of Australia (Abu, 2014), France (Islam, 2012), United Kingdom (Shuva, 2017), USA (Engelman, 2005), and Bangladesh (Hossain, 2012; Islam, 2012; Aslm & Seher, 2018). Islam & Ahmed (2012) report that in general the needs related to agricultural, educational, cultural, entrepreneurial and recreational, although there were slight differences in what the rural and urban groups cited as their information needs. In a national study conducted in Finland, (the first in Europe of its kind), Sipila (2015) states that over 70 % of the 13 000 respondents surveyed admitted that the libraries have had a positive impact in improving their quality of life. She further highlights that about 80 % of Finns use the library regularly.

In a study covering six African countries (Kenya, Ghana, Zambia, Ethiopia, Uganda and Zimbabwe) users indicated that relevant books, convenient locations and longer opening hours would be key motivators for potential and library users to use the libraries more often (Elbert *et al.*, 2012). Mamafha *et al.*, (2014) conducted a study to determine level of ICT use in Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality (EMM). Their findings show that there is a need for users of public libraries to be trained in the use of ICT's in order for them to derive maximum benefits. There is also need to review some of the restrictive policies of the libraries, for example the amount of time allowed for users to use the facilities.

In another study done in a remote area in Mpumalanga Hart (2012) found no evidence of developmental work or partnering between the public libraries and other developmental agencies in such fields as agriculture, education and health. There was also no evidence of any literacy training, which is a basic function of public libraries. Collaboration amongst these agencies would have strengthened efforts of each in trying to bring positive change to the community. Where one was lacking the other agency would have filled the gap, and community be developing. No study has ever been conducted to determine the information needs of the Mutale rural community, hence the objective of this research.

2.5 Libraries and Access to Information

Access to information (A2I) is an enabler to economic freedom; this is due to the fact that individuals who are able to access and also use information are better able to participate in the economy (Strand, 2016). Access to information is a basic human right which is inherently inalienable and indivisible to every human being (Garrido & Geyber, 2017). It is the life-blood of any meaningful democratic participation. Without the right of access, the affirmation, and more concretely the realization of all other rights is fundamentally compromised. However, IFLA asserts that half the world's population is still not enjoying access to information online (Lyon Declaration on Access to Information and Development, 2014). When communities have access to information they are better able to exercise their rights, learn new skills, enrich their cultural identity and take part in decision-making (IFLA, 2013). Thus, public libraries as entities which provide free information for all should ensure that not only are their libraries having resources for the public, but these should be accessible to all.

Also impacting negatively on access is library opening hours which should be accommodating to most of the people. When many users are excluded because the library is open during standard working hours, a lot of potential users with real information needs will continually be left out. Accessibility should also take into consideration the formats that are provided in the library. With the advent of digital technology, librarians should aim at equipping every user and potential users with necessary skills to manipulate their way in the digital platforms. Training emerges as imperative, so that the vast amount of information available on the web can be exploited for the benefit of the community.

2.6 How Public Libraries are Driving Development Worldwide

Libraries are a valuable social resource, giving job seekers, entrepreneurs, students and learners access to information, the internet and photocopy facilities, in addition to other reading needs of the public. They, therefore, play a very important role in fostering social and economic development. “In South Africa, where many people have inadequate living space and no electricity to enable them to study, public libraries give a high priority to providing the basic facilities, light, tables and chairs” (Saur, 2001). Effective and efficient library provisions should therefore place an emphasis on a holistic product consisting of good information resources targeting the various areas of interest, a reasonable library building, good amenities and spot on professional services provided by a suitably qualified librarian.

Libraries assist governments and people communicate, organise, structure and understand data that is critical to development by: providing information on basic rights and entitlements, public services, environments, health education, work opportunities and public expenditure; identifying and focusing attention on the most relevant and pressing needs and problems of a population; using ICT infrastructure to speed up delivery of services and provide access to crucial information and by providing public facilities and space for wider civil society participation and engagement in decision-making.

Specific examples also abound of libraries engaged in developing their communities. The following are some of these initiative as documented by IFLA (2016) which have changed people’s lives: In America, a third of the population of around 77 million people use a public library yearly

to access health, government information, language and culture information;. In Chile, a national digital literacy campaign trained hundreds of thousands of people in basic technical skills, via a network of more than 300 public libraries. In Mexico public libraries provide the only internet access for nearly 2/3 of rural communities.

In rural Botswana public libraries serve as small business owners offices, helping people make their businesses more sophisticated and competitive. In Namibia, the Katatura library provides public access to ICT, study rooms, and classes on using mobile phones, and in South Africa public libraries have significantly improved their access to information to their communities with the provision of the conditional grant for community and public libraries. Through this grant, libraries in previously disadvantaged communities were able to hire more librarians and build more libraries which are aptly resourced with books, ICTs, gaming gadgets for children and tablets. Furthermore, South Africa is also participating in the Global Libraries Initiative which in true South African style was rebranded the Mzansi Libraries Online (MLO) project, to afford South Africans a kind of ownership to the program. The aim of this project is to create an informed and information literate citizenry, which is able to participate in community building projects and make informed decisions.

2.7 Factors Impeding Rural Libraries in Providing Services to their Communities

Despite good intentions on the part of librarians there are constraints that hinder them to provide services and resources which their communities can use (Ebilowate, 2010). There are generally two underlying challenges facing LIS today; undervaluing of LIS as a profession and a general underfunding (Nkondo, 2014; Satgoor, 2015; Bopape *et al.*, 2017). Librarians have the potential to play an important social and educational roles in society. The LIS policy technical team (2017) identified some of these roles librarians play in contribution to the nation as South Africa aspires to be a thriving knowledge economy.

Theoretically, libraries should be able to support high-quality education by supporting learners and students with timely and relevant information to support curricular and extra-curricular activities. However, their role as a serious contender in supporting education and literacy is still undervalued (Strand, 2016). These challenges pertaining to the undervaluing of the LIS profession today still hinder librarians in their quest to prove relevance in the development and growth of the new South Africa. When the government plans for the eradication of illiteracy and

other developmental projects, there does not seem to be any consideration that libraries have the potential to bring social cohesion and tackle the problems of fragmentation and unequal society.

Libraries are relegated to low priority, as seen in the under-resourcing of materials, staffing, facilities, and funding (Witbooi, 2007; Mamafha *et al.*, 2014; Nkondo, 2014; Bopape *et al.*, 2017). Many researchers have identified funding as the biggest challenge facing provision of services in rural areas (Akanwa & Akanga, 2013; Jimma, 2014; Strand, 2016; Civallero, 2017). Funding is the responsibility of the government since libraries fall either under provisional or local government. According to Kamba (2009) and Ebilowate (2010), funding impacts on inadequate basic infrastructure (ICT's, roads and transportation as well as electrification). The private sector has been identified as an entity that adds to the infrastructure woes, by concentrating more provisions in urban areas and to the demise of the rural areas (Roland & Parore, 2017). In the KPMG report commissioned by DAC (2006), it was revealed that clarity as to who is legally mandated to provide for and therefore fund public libraries is still not evident. This shortcoming can give municipalities a leeway to prioritise funding for other areas they deem pressing, at the peril of public libraries (Nkondo, 2014). This in turn will impact negatively on the provision of books and other materials, staffing, including training at both provincial and library level (Nkondo, 2017).

Funding was also identified as a challenge in IFLA's Project Report #22 (2003) which cites lack of proper funding and official support as hindrances to potential responses to indigenous information needs, which might be non-standard users and services. Uwamwezi (2017) posits that given the sterling work that libraries do to develop their communities, the funding they receive is insufficient. Lehman (2014) asserts that while libraries are expected to contribute to knowledge production and thus development, government and relevant departments do not factor in this aspect when allocating budgets for libraries.

Jaegler *et al.* (2011) highlighted the fact that libraries have to continue advocating for their value in the midst of dwindling budgets/uncertain economic times. Advocacy involves "the actions individuals or organisations undertake to influence decision-making at local, regional, state, national, and international levels that help create a desired policy funding change in support of public libraries" (Cottrill, 2015). Presently, South Africa is one of the 75 African countries currently

participating in the IFLA International Advocacy Programme (IAP) specifically to garner recognition from relevant government institutions.

There are other challenges facing the running of libraries and provision of services. According to Nyana (2009) one of the problems relate to the library system itself being inherited from the western world. Most of the books in these libraries are in English, and this is neither spoken nor understood by the rural dwellers, since the majority of them are not literate. These Low literacy levels and technical competencies of rural dwellers are, therefore, also factors in what can be provided by the librarians and successfully utilized (Real *et al.*,2014; Sheik, 2017). The books found in most libraries also speak to western ideals and do nothing for the advancement of the rural populace. Nyana (2009) recommends that rural libraries re-invent themselves and incorporate oral tradition in their collections instead of concentrating on building print and electronic collections that are wasted as they cannot be utilized by most rural dwellers.

Nkondo *et al.* (2014) says cumbersome and ineffective procedures also pose a challenge to librarians as procurement and acquisition of resources is handled by people who have no clear understanding of how the library environment works. This even results in offering of tenders to companies who are not conversant with the library world and thus hinders smooth and effective acquisition of resources Nkondo *et al.* (2015). It will be better if local municipalities are given the responsibility of running the libraries by the provincial government. The handing over should be aptly paired with the necessary funding, so that the running of libraries is done with no delays and also with no restrictive funding.

Ideally librarians should be at the centre of facilitating the acquisition of resources that need to be acquired for their users. They should also do so after getting user input through for instance, use of suggestion box and user surveys of what their information needs are. Librarians know which suppliers to work with to acquire books with shorter turnaround times, with an option to return incorrectly supplied resources. The present system of books that are supplied from provincial government without user input undermines their right to timely and relevant information.

Some researchers have made some recommendations to tackle the problems faced by rural libraries. Ebilowate (2010) recommended adequate funding, training and retraining of librarians

in ICT's and government legislated internet connectivity to rural areas libraries. Kamba (2009) also recommends a detailed investigation into how specific groups of rural people access and use information. It is recommended that the government equips all libraries in rural areas with enough computers and uninterrupted access, to militate against shortage of printed books. Librarians should also be ready to assist users with the necessary training to access digital information.

2.8 Summary of Literature Review

Available literature on rural public libraries showed that information is a vital resource for development for all people especially those that are marginalized by reason of being female, minorities, illiterate, citizens of the developing world or those in rural communities. The institution that has been singled out as an important entity that offers information and access to ICTs for free at the point of use is the public library. However, literature also showed that certain impediments impact on information provision. Amongst these are poor or insufficient infrastructure, erratic power to access the internet, bad roads to visit libraries and lack of the necessary skills to process information, unavailability and suitability of books in different subjects, insufficient operating hours.

People who live in rural areas are at the centre of rural community development initiatives. It is important to have inter-sectorial and multifaceted projects that aim to develop rural communities. Participation of the rural dwellers is necessary to ensure that services provided by their local library speak to their developmental needs. When services are uniformly offered indiscriminately of the community served they do nothing to uplift the standard of living of the intended dwellers. The communities' needs have to be assessed and services tailored according to what the needs of the communities dictate. Specifically, libraries in this instance need to conduct regular community needs assessments to ensure that their services evolve to meet the dynamic world of the information society. User satisfaction surveys are an integral part of good management in libraries. Only when users are satisfied with what is being offered are they able to talk positively about the library to other potential users. Users' continued usage of the library also depends on whether they are satisfied with resources and services available in the library at any given time.

Several studies also revealed the needs of library users worldwide. In general users in the developing world have similar information needs that pertain to cultural, educational, agricultural and health. Studies also revealed that most public libraries in rural areas are understaffed and

have insufficient resources to support the developmental needs of their respective communities. To mitigate against some of the challenges it is important that rural public libraries are adequately funded and resourced, available computers are enough to serve the community and are connected to the internet.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The aim of the current study was to develop a framework for enhanced functionality of public libraries in rural areas. A mixed methods approach was used and involved engaging key informants and groups of adults, youth and children to get their perceptions about library services in their local library as well as determine their information needs. Qualitative and quantitative studies were carried out in succession, implying that they helped deepen the understanding of elements that could be used to strengthen the functionality of public libraries. In this chapter, the description of the study area is presented first. Thereafter, the research design, population and sampling procedures, data collection, data analysis and ethical considerations are covered.

3.2 Description of the Study Area

The study was conducted in the now defunct Mutale Local Municipality, which was part of Vhembe District. When this study was undertaken, Vhembe district was composed of Makhado, Musina, Mutale and Thulamela Local Municipalities. The geographical positioning coordinates for Mutale Municipality were 2 367.19 km²:22° 35' S 30° 40' E (Mutale Local Municipality, 2014). It was situated in the far north eastern corner of Vhembe District. The Kruger National Park formed the eastern boundary of Mutale Local Municipality, with greater Limpopo River forming the north eastern boundary. The Municipality shared the borders with Musina and Zimbabwe to the north, and Mozambique on the eastern side. To the west and south were Makhado and Thulamela Local Municipalities (Mutale Local Municipality, 2014). Before the 2016 local government elections in South Africa, parts of Mutale were incorporated into Musina and Thulamela Municipalities. Figure 3.1 shows the map of Mutale Municipality and location of the public library that formed the basis of the current study.

There were seven traditional authority councils in the Municipality. Thirteen wards made up the mainly rural Municipality. The total population was estimated to be 91 870 with the people residing in about 23 750 households (Mutale Local Municipality, 2014).

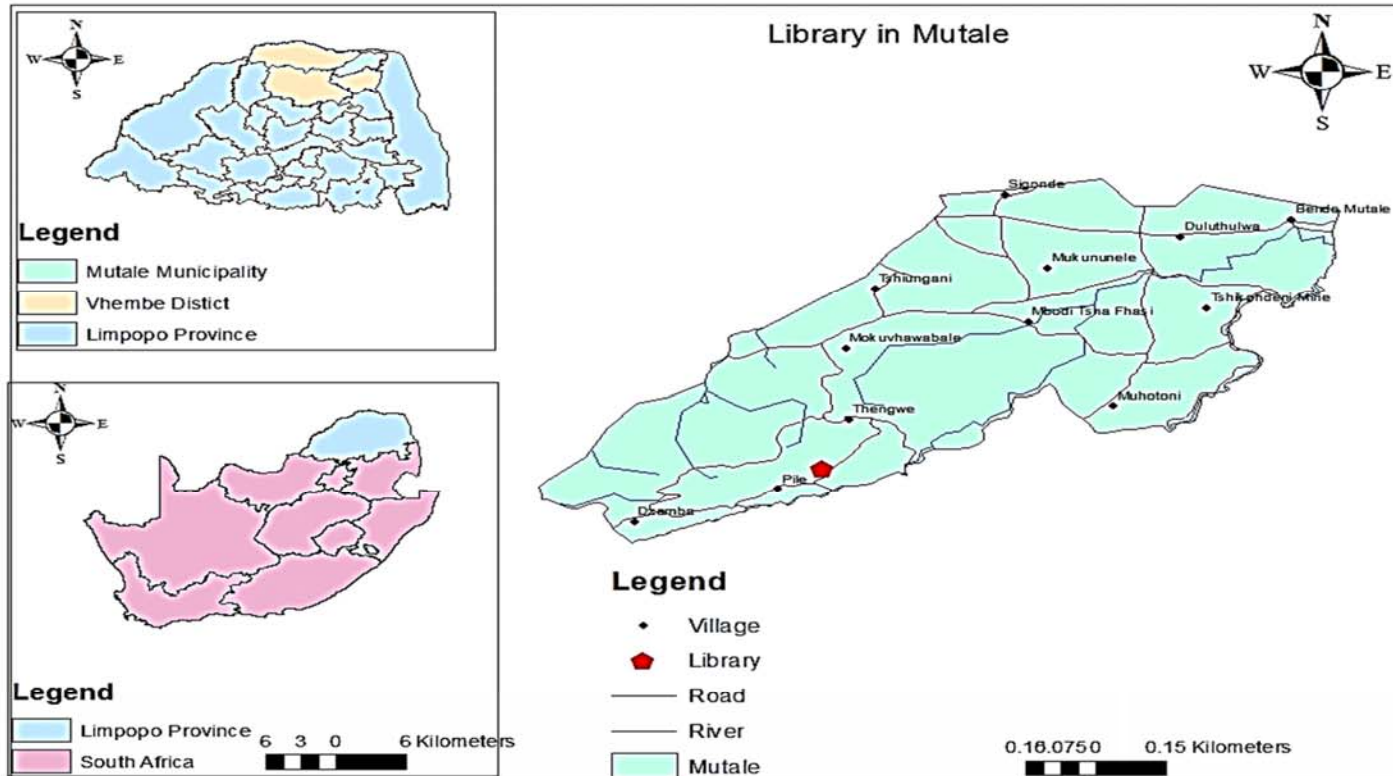


Figure 3.1 Map showing the library within the then Mutale local municipality (Prepared by University of Venda GIS Department)

The Mutale Local Municipality (2014) listed 109 primary schools, 35 secondary schools and 2 private schools. “High levels of adult illiteracy occur within the various areas of the community and this in return increases poverty and health risks to ignorant residents. Information could remedy this situation (Mutale Local Municipality, 2014).

There was only one public library, which was situated in Tshilamba in what could be described as the town of the municipality. The library was situated near the hub of the village where several other government entities were located. These include a traffic department, department of communications offices, several small businesses in Tshilamba as well as a taxi rank. The library was said to be not yet functional and not meeting the norms and standards for a library (Mutale Local Municipality, 2014). Most of the rural villages were located far from the library. The principal language in the region is Tshivenda.

3.3 Research Design

A research design details an outline of how the different components of research are going to be conducted effectively to address the research problem. In this study, a mixed methods research design was applied, coupling qualitative and quantitative procedures to address the aim of the investigation. Research design serves as a framework for deciding the order and manner in which qualitative and quantitative strands of research are ‘mixed’ in a study. The ‘mixing’ or ‘integration’ is of particular importance to this approach, as it distinguishes mixed method research from other approaches (Creswell et al., 2013; Sandelowski, 2000).

Mixed methods research (MMR) was chosen because it can facilitate attainment of more valid conclusions as it is possible to compare obtained results from both qualitative and quantitative methods aiming for either convergent or divergent views (Creswel & Clark, 2017). For this reason, the sequential exploratory mixed method design was used. Figure 3.2 showcases the procedure that was followed in this design. In this figure, it is evident that qualitative data were collected first. Findings from this phase informed the development of a questionnaire for the quantitative data collection in phase two. These two phases were later merged and conclusions were drawn for the study. This ensured that a range of aspects were triangulated in the analysis of the results to ensure reliability in the findings and also reduced bias (Suter, 2012, Sterfors *et al.*, 2014)



Figure 3.2 The exploratory sequential mixed method design adopted for the study (Author's own)

3.4 Data Collection

The population for this study were dwellers of Mutale who all are targeted to benefit from using the library (Babbie 2013). Data were collected in two phases. For the first phase sampling was purposeful and included respondents who were deemed better able to answer the research questions (Creswell 2017). Purposeful or judgmental sampling specifically targets participants who are best suited to provide answers to the central phenomenon under exploration (De Vos, 2002; Bless *et al.*, 2013; Creswell, 2014). Four government officials responsible for the running of the library were engaged as key informants in the first of two studies during this phase. This study also included four librarians, two of whom were contracted for a period of three years and two modular librarians who were stationed at the library at the time of data collection. It was also imperative to include the security personnel and cleaners since their services are as detrimental as information provision to the community.

For the second study, purposive sampling was also utilized to constitute groups of adults, youth and children. Two mixed groups of adults, adult males, adult females, a mixed group of youth in school, two mixed groups of children, a group of girls and a group of boys formed the samples for this phase. In total 150 respondents were engaged in the study. Data were collected through face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions. A semi-structured interview guide (Appendices D, E) was used to collect data. The interview questions were based on the reviewed literature of similar studies conducted elsewhere. This ensured that the interviews stayed focused on the topic of research. In all instances, the investigator asked the same questions for all respondents albeit with minor adjustments depending on how respondents answered the previous question. Before the interviews could be conducted, the investigator did self-location – which requires that before engaging one’s research participants, some details about the researcher are shared with the participants (Leech, 2007). For this reason, the investigator introduced herself and her assistant, gave the purpose of the visit and read through and explained the participant consent form to all potential respondents, and also gave the approximate time for the duration of the interviews.

Participants were given the platform to ask questions about the deliberations before they started, to remove any doubts or uncertainties they might have had. They were also asked to consent to the deliberations, voice recording and being photographed by completing the consent forms. The investigator facilitated the interviews and discussions herself and the research assistant captured all the responses. Most respondents felt comfortable engaging in the discussions and interviews in Tshivenda, the local language. The investigator thus engaged the respondents in both Tshivenda and English so that respondents can answer in the language they felt comfortable with. After going through all the questions for focus groups and interviews, all responses were read out to the respondents to ensure the accuracy of the responses captured. This also gave an opportunity for any necessary modifications or additions to be effected as per confirmation from the respondents. On average, the interviews lasted between 25 and 35 minutes. The focus group discussions lasted between 35 and 60 minutes.

In the second phase, which was quantitative in nature, convenience and snowball sampling techniques were applied. Convenience sampling was used with respondents who were available at the library, drop-in centre and government offices. Snowballing was used as a result of a chance meeting at an ATM with a university student who was from Mutale which gave an opportunity for the student to recommend other students from the study area who were willing to participate. She was willing to give telephone numbers of her closest friends who were also asked to recommend other people (not necessarily students) who were willing to participate. So the respondents were identified as such through this snowballing activity (Creswell, 2014).

A questionnaire (Appendix F) was developed based on the responses of the qualitative study and used a ranking matrix of 1 – 5 (not important/not satisfied – extremely important/ extremely satisfied) to collect data during the second phase. It was not practical to translate the questionnaire in Tshivenda since most of the terminology is not available in this language. For this reason, when asking children and youth to respond, the questionnaire was not self-administered. A research assistant was trained to assist the respondents to complete the questionnaire. She sat with one of them at a time and went through the questions one by one giving the translated questions in Tshivenda and ticking the responses children and youth respondents gave. It took three weeks to complete the questionnaires as only proper attention could be given to a few respondents at any given day, even more so because they all had different

schedules from their different schools and could not be reached at the same time. All of the children and youth were sourced from the drop-in center, and this presented a wide pool of respondents since they came from different villages.

For adult respondents the questionnaire was self-administered. Most adults were found at their work place; this ensured that the completed questionnaires could be collected at one place and on the same day. Other questionnaires were given to the librarian to give to library users and some were dropped at government offices and CBO's for staff to complete. Respondents were given a week to complete and the investigator went to collect all the forms herself. At each location where the questionnaires were left, one person was asked to coordinate the collection and safekeeping of the completed questionnaires. This increased the response rate as the investigator kept in touch with the people helping coordinating the collection of the questionnaires.

3.5 Data Analysis

In this study, qualitative data were transcribed and translated into English (for responses captured in Tshivenda). Personal notes written during and immediately after the interviews and focus group discussions assisted the investigator understand certain responses made (Leech et al., 2007, Onweigbuzie, 2005). Atlas.ti version 8 was used to analyse qualitative data. Atlas.ti is a qualitative data analysis (QDA) software package that can code a number of different media types, including text, images, videos, and audio (Sterfos et al., 2014). The reason for choosing to use this software instead of thematic content analysis was that QDA software facilitates coding of all kinds of text with ease, allows for searching for specific texts in the data and also to triangulate the responses using visualizations. This allowed for description and testing of themes in the qualitative data as well as discoverability of other patterns which would not be possible if done manually. The responses were analysed to see if there were any similarities or differences in the perceptions of adults, youth and children to the research questions posed. A final list of thirteen codes was adopted and from these the excerpts used in the findings for this study were extracted. Illustrative verbatim quotes feature in some sections of the results and discussion.

During the quantitative phase data capturing was managed using Microsoft Excel 2013, which made it easier to compute statistical data after the data was transferred into International Business Machines, Statistical Product and Service Solutions (IBM SPSS) version 24. Chi square and

Cramer's V values were calculated and analysis was set at 0.05 confidence level. Chi-square test was used to calculate significant differences in the perceptions of the community on the local library between male and female residents and between different age groups - adults, youths and children (Babbie, 2010).

In addition to Chi square Cramer's V values were also calculated. Cramer's V is the most widely used nominal association used to measure the strength of relationship regardless of the data set sample size. Cramer's V measures the strength of relationship for any size of contingency table, and it offers good norming values from 0 (zero) to 1 (one) for relative comparison of the strength of correlation regardless of the table size. The point decision was fixed at 2.0 since the questionnaire was four and five point scale. Any item that attracted a mean of 3.00 and above was regarded as important and ≤ 2 as not important

3.6 Data Saturation

Data saturation is receiving considerable attention from many researchers (Fusch & Ness, 2015). There are many opinions and frameworks proffered (O'reilly & Parker (2013) even though no explicit guidelines for determining sample sizes are available (Guest *et al.*, 2006). Data saturation has been hailed as "gold standard" for quality research in qualitative studies (Sandelowski, 2000). It can best be described as data adequacy, implying that no new information is forthcoming (Hancock *et al.*, 2016). Sample size is important in reaching data saturation which raises the elusive questions of how much is enough? Other researchers have even cautioned against both over and under sampling (Francis *et al.*, 2010), stating that both sampling statuses present an ethical issue in the form of wastage of research funds and wasting of the participants time. Where there is under sampling results lose their transferability and cannot be generalised to a wider population (Francis *et al.*, 2010; Saunders et al., 2018). This means that a researcher must try to strike a balance and collect enough information from enough samples so that data can be trustworthy

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues are part of a research process. They are present at the planning stages of the research as well as throughout the research stages and a researcher has to be aware and act appropriately at the various stages (Israel, 2015; Resnik, 2015; Willows, 2017). The following guidelines were followed in this study:

Permission to conduct the study

Ethical clearance and approval were granted by the Research office of the University before conducting this study, Project No: SARDF/16/IRD/10/2208 (Appendix C). The intention and permission to do the study in Mutale was communicated to the relevant authority – the manager library services from the Department of Arts and Culture. The manager gave written permission (Appendix E) for the investigator to access the library to interview key informants and library users. Nine interviews and three focus group discussions were conducted in the library and care was taken to ensure this went in an unobtrusive manner so that the process did not disturb the normal functioning of the library. .

For the focus groups with *khoro* the traditional leader, culturally appropriate protocols were followed by asking for permission to engage the villagers in the study. This is best practice when one wants to engage with villagers to observe the authority of the traditional leaders who might otherwise feel offended if permission is not first sought.

Informed consent

The purpose of the study was clearly communicated to all participants and it was ensured they understood the value of the research in their personal capacity as well as community development. All respondents had to give verbal or written consent (Appendix D) before interviews or group discussions. Since the respondents were the library users and some of whom were school children, permission was first sought through their parents or guardians who were asked to sign the consent forms indicating that they allowed them to participate in the study. Permission was also sought from all respondents for the sessions to be recorded and photographs taken and used in the research. Participants were also assured that confidentiality

was guaranteed so that they were at ease to openly voice their views. The focus group discussions were conducted at a convenient place for the participants and their safety and comfort were not compromised by a venue which was not suitable. All participants were assured that participation was voluntary and that they were free to leave the research at any stage without the danger of being victimized

No Harm to participants

The villagers were engaged in their natural setting where they often have their scheduled meeting. The focus group discussion was held on the day that they had a meeting and this helped with the availability of the members as well as mitigate any costs that might have been incurred had they travelled for the discussions only. Care was also taken to ensure that children and youth were engaged in safe venues (classrooms and the library) and were not exposed to the sweltering heat outside at the time of data collection.

Principle of Justice

During the study when engaging groups of youth and children, particular attention was given to advent of democratic societies in most parts of the world, children and youth today enjoy rights which are universally held and with compliance monitored via legislation. For this reason, most of the ethical consideration enjoyed by adults such as freedom of expression, also formed the basis of dealing with children and youth. However, the principle of justice was particularly highlighted (Greig, *et al.*, 2013). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) - , champions the liberty and welfare of persons up to the age of 18 in regarding their participation and how they should be treated – with respect (UNICEF, 1989). Article 13 of the UNCRC states that: “The child shall have the right to freedom of expression, this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.” This statement guided the investigator during her research to empower them to speak freely while she listened respectfully . Table 3.2 shows a summary of the research methodology for the entire study.

3.8 Reliability and Validity

Yardley (2008) defines validity as the degree to which research is accepted as sound, legitimate and authoritative. Valid findings are regarded as trustworthy and useful. In this study, validity was ensured by triangulation of methods of data collection and responses from different respondents who were stratified by age and gender. By using triangulation in this study, the investigator gathered data from key informants and the users and potential users of the library. This facilitated the establishment of reliability of data from the two different sources. Specifically, the key informants were asked to point out the challenges they face in their quest to provide services to the community. The community was asked what challenges they face when they try to access the provided services. The fact that the quantitative study was crafted based on results from the first study indicates that the results were not predicted. Data collected was also compared (notes and voice recordings) for accuracy. These steps ensured that the following criteria for validity in qualitative research were met “sensitivity to context”, commitment to rigour, coherence and transparency” as advocated by Yardley (2008)

Table 3.1 Summary of research methodology that was used in the study on libraries as hubs of information for rural community development

Variable	Challenges in delivering information services – study 1 Qualitative	Community information for development needs Study 2 - Qualitative	Community satisfaction survey study 3 - Quantitative
Objective	To identify challenges public libraries face in delivering information services to adults, youth and children	To find out if information needs of adults, youth and children vary due to age	To assess the level of satisfaction of Children, youth and adults with the Services of the local public library.
Design	Qualitative – Explorative Design	Qualitative – Explorative Design	Evaluative Survey
Research Questions	What are challenges faced by the library in delivering services to adults, children and youth?	Do the information needs of adults, youth and children vary due to age?	What is the level of satisfaction of adults, youth and children with services of the library?
Measurements/ Variables	challenges, opportunities, perception	Age, Information, gender, perception	Age, gender, Level of satisfaction
Sampling Method	Purposive	Purposive	convenience, snowballing
Respondents	Key informants	Adults, youth and children	Adults, youth and children
Data Collection Method	Interviews; Focus Group	Interviews; Focus groups	survey
Data Collection Technique	Interviewing, Focus group discussions	Interviews. Focus group discussions	surveying
Tools	Interview guide, notes, voice recorder, camera	Interview guide, camera, coding sheets, voice recorder	Questionnaire
Data Analysis Methods Techniques and Tools	QDA using atlas.ti version 8 Coding, quotations, networks	QDA using atlas.ti version 8 Coding, quotations, networks	SPSS version 24 Chi Square tests; Crammer's V test

CHAPTER FOUR: HINDRANCES TO RENDERING DESIRED LIBRARY SERVICES TO RURAL COMMUNITIES

ABSTRACT

Access to timely and relevant information is widely acknowledged as an important input for rural community development. As such, public libraries should facilitate free access to this crucial resource which can help rural dwellers fully understand their rights and make informed decisions in various matters that can affect their livelihoods. In this paper it is argued that getting the views of key informants would shed light as to what hinders proper service provision to the community. The study used an exploratory design. The sampling was purposive and included government officials, librarians, cleaners and security guards. Data were collected through face to face interviews as well a focus group discussion with a group constituted of cleaners and security guards. Data were analyzed using Atlas.ti version 8. The findings indicated that the library was hindered by centralised management of libraries from district level, inadequate funding, insufficient resources and lack of ICT support. Positive response to these challenges could potentially bring changes that could benefit the community and uplift their lives. Thus, failure to implement the recommendations made might hinder the library from providing relevant information for rural development.

Key words: decentralisation, funding, hindrances, ICTs, library services, regulatory framework

4.1 Introduction

Providing access and connecting knowledge to the needs of individuals and the rural communities has always been at the centre of the mission and purpose of public libraries (Cecchini, 2018, Skinner, 2018). A public library is regarded as a gateway to information, in addition to being a powerful entity to drive development, particularly in rural communities (Mnkeni-Saurombe & Zimu 2013; Ejedafiru 2015; Toyama, 2018). It can be regarded as a hub of knowledge and a dynamic social institution because it serves as an indispensable resource centre that provides reliable information to those who need it

Presently, public libraries operate in an information-rich, knowledge based and networked society characterized by rapid change in technology. In a worldwide scale, provision of the various services come with its fair share of challenges (Chauhan & Bhatt, 2018). Public libraries increasingly find themselves at a crossroads of opportunity brought about by the confluence of economic and social challenges that the economic climate has caused, paralleled by opportunities brought about by developments in ICTs to provide a wider range of services and more channels of access to them (Avramidou, 2011; Castek, et al., 2017; Racelis, 2018). Therefore, 21st century libraries as the appropriate development agencies need an environment of service provision that is both enabling and value adding. It was therefore imperative to identify the challenges public libraries face in rendering services to children, youth and adults in rural communities.

4.2 Research Methodology

The comprehensive methodology is already outlined in chapter three. This section will focus on the methodology that was followed in conducting the exploratory study for this chapter. An exploratory study uses a variety of methods such as interviews and focus group discussion to gain insight into the phenomenon under study. The advantage/benefit of using a qualitative research design is that respondents can elaborate on their responses and also there is always a chance that some questions which were not initially thought of might arise during the deliberations. This study sought to garner in-depth understanding of what public libraries face in their bid to provide services that meet the needs of the community by engaging key informants. The sample for this study was composed of government officials, librarians as well as security staff and cleaners (whose services act as an expedient to the provision of library services). Table 4.1 shows the profile of respondents for this study. Data were collected through interviews with government officials and librarians and through a focus group discussion with cleaners and security guards. Atlas ti version 8 was used to analyse responses which were categorized by themes. Excerpts and visual representations of the outputs feature in the results sections.

4.3 Results

The results are presented based on the objectives of this study as outlined in chapter one. Figure 4.1 depicts all these challenges. The results presented show the demographic characteristics of

participants, challenges identified, the weaknesses identified, the positive aspects identified about the library and solutions suggested to make the library more functional.

4.3.1 Background of participants

A total of 14 key informants participated in this study in either semi-structured interviews or in a focus group discussion. Seven (7) participated in the focus group discussion while the other seven (7) were engaged in interviews. The focus group discussion was made up of two (2) security guards and five (5) cleaners. The informants were made up of eight (8) females and seven (7) males. The age distribution of the participants, were between 23 and 54. Of all the key informants only three (3) government officials were employed full time. The rest of the informants were employed on contract. Table 4.1 outlines the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

4.3.2 Challenges identified by key informants

Key informants were asked if there were any hindrances which marred them from providing services and resources that could potentially satisfy the community's information needs. All of them answered in the affirmative. The informants were further asked to indicate specific challenges which needed attention with a possibility of being rectified for future smooth running of the library. According to government officials, funding, shortage of books and ineffective way in which books and other resources were acquired as well as opening hours were cited as the main challenges. Figure 4.1 shows all the challenges perceived by the key informants.

Shortage of books

The librarians, pointed to a shortage of books particularly those for learner support. The challenges they are facing come with lack of dedicated and specified budget to acquire the resources. Figure 4.2 shows the perceptions of key informants with respect to shortage of books. The following statement from one librarian relating to the shortage of books highlights the extent of shortage of books;

“Our material is not enough, more especially our reference collection and the management sciences, these are not available at all.”

Table 4.1 Profile of Key informants in the first phase of the study

Respondents	Gender	Age	Position in the Library	Employment status
KI 1	Male	54	Government official	Full time
KI 2	Male	49	Government official	Full time
KI 3	Male	48	Government official	Full time
KI 4	Female	26	Librarian	Contract
KI 5	Female	24	Library Assistant	Contract
KI 6	Male	32	Modular librarian	Contract
KI 7	Female	25	Modular librarian	Contract
KI 8	Female	32	Cleaner	Contract
KI 9	Female	36	Cleaner	Contract
KI 10	Female	27	Cleaner	Contract
KI 11	Female	28	Cleaner	Contract
KI 12	Female	24	Cleaner	Contract
KI 13	Male	42	Security guard	Contract
KI 14	Male	37	Security guard	Contract

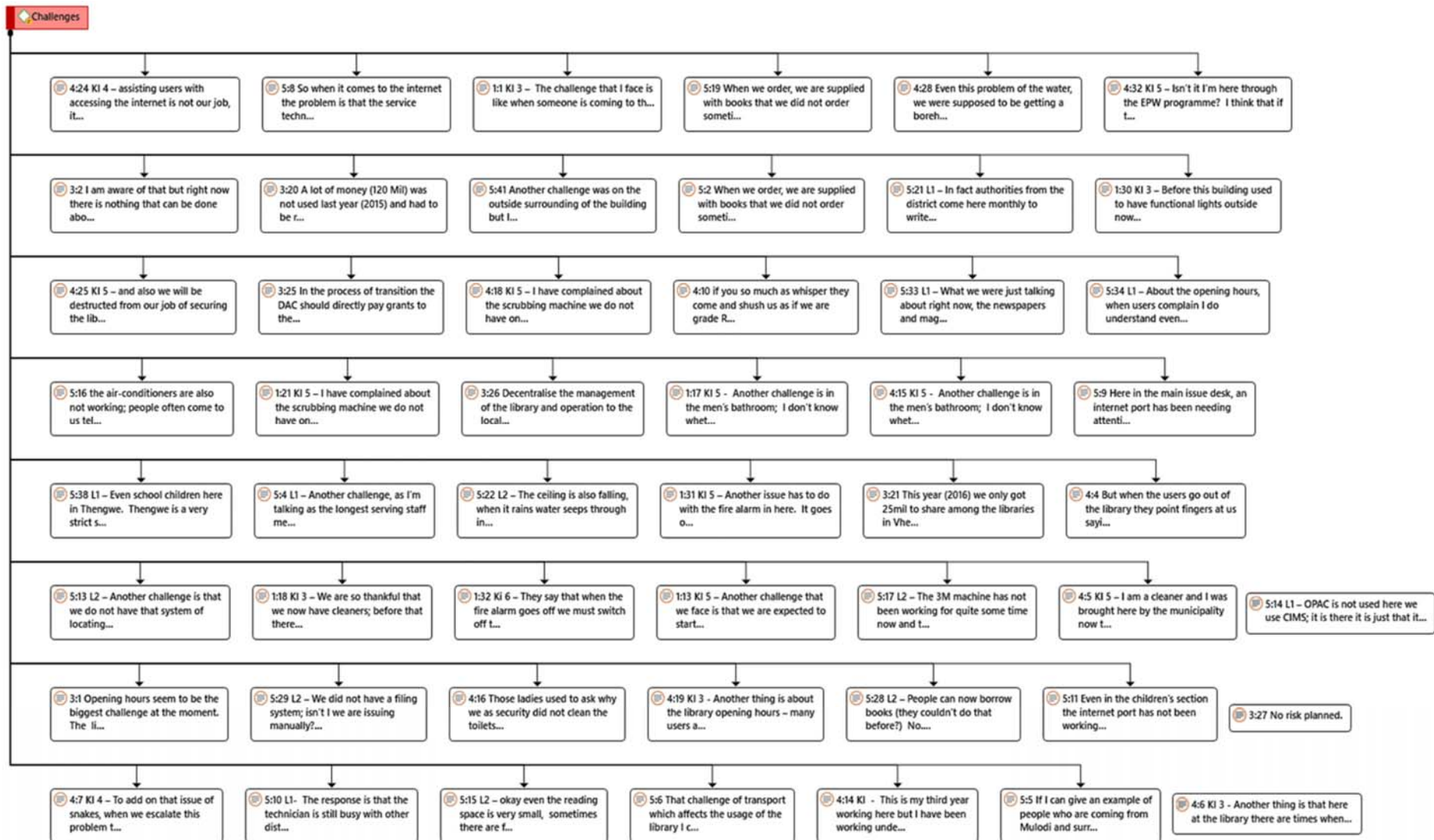


Figure 4.1 Challenges faced by key informants in rendering services to the community

Librarians were also in agreement with the government officials on the same challenges and also had an additional item which related to lack of support from the authorities, particularly when it came to IT support. Security staff indicated attitude from users, issues surrounding continuity of service, and lack of maintenance of the building and surrounding areas which were posing security risks. Cleaners identified the issue of working under contract for years, and infrastructural deficiencies which made their work difficult.

Shortage of books

The librarians, pointed to a shortage of books particularly those for learner support. The challenges they are facing come with lack of dedicated and specified budget to acquire the resources. Figure 4.2 shows the perceptions of key informants with respect to shortage of books. The following statement from one librarian relating to the shortage of books highlights the extent of shortage of books;

“Our material is not enough, more especially our reference collection and the management sciences, these are not available at all.”

To further expand on the previous assertion, even when there is an opportunity to boost the collection there are still some challenges;

“The challenge that we face with book selection is that when we go to book fairs only librarians select – no consultation with users; even if we select we do not know the budget so sometimes we can select books and they (authorities) just decide to bring any books that make up R15 000.00 for instance, even if those books are not on our priority list and they do this without consulting with the librarians.”

Shortage of books was also identified by government officials. One of them had this to say about the matter:

“Even if there are books donated by others the department refuses to take them; I remember a time when we got a big donation from UNIVEN and we went there to select and loaded three bakkies-ful. Those books were not allowed in the library. The department said the auditors will query them so they were just stored in another room up till now.”

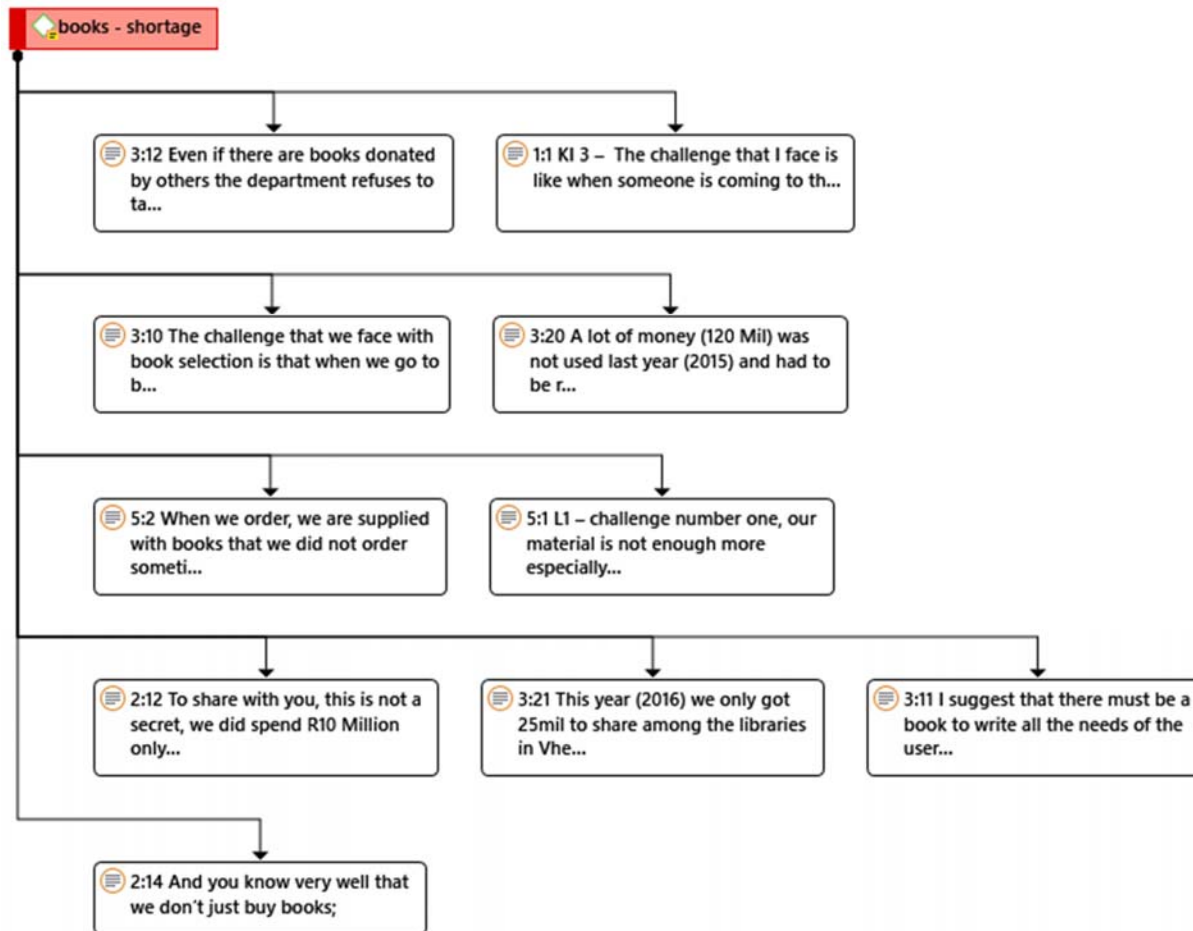


Figure 4.2 Perceptions of key informants in respect of shortage of books

Lack of support from authorities

Lack of support from library authorities was also cited when it comes to responding to problems about the library escalated for their attention. Both librarians and the support staff (cleaners and security guards) had the same concern. Figure 4.3 showcases the responses relating to lack of support from authorities. One librarian had this to say about lack of support from authorities:

“In fact authorities from the district are aware of our problems, they send a person to come here every month to write the incident reports so they get reports about these things every month, the air-conditioners and the internet, they know about these things because they come every month to do the report.”

Results also showed that support staff had unique challenges associated with their day-to-day provision of library services. Among these are the dedicated space for the security guards and malfunctioning ablution facilities for the men, which also impacted on the inter-personal relationship between the security staff and library users. For instance, one cleaner expressed this collusion as follows:

“Another challenge is in the men’s bathroom; I don’t know whether the unit was not built properly or what but the chamber is installed in such a way that when one finishes using it they must press a certain button for the waste to be flushed, but when they do so nothing happens and you find layers and layers of the waste and it renders the bathroom unusable. So when we report this to the authorities they say we must put stones (laughing), we must put stones? When we encourage the men to use the proper toilets instead of the urinal they refuse and we didn’t even have masks to block the smell as cleaners, it is just recently that they brought us some”.

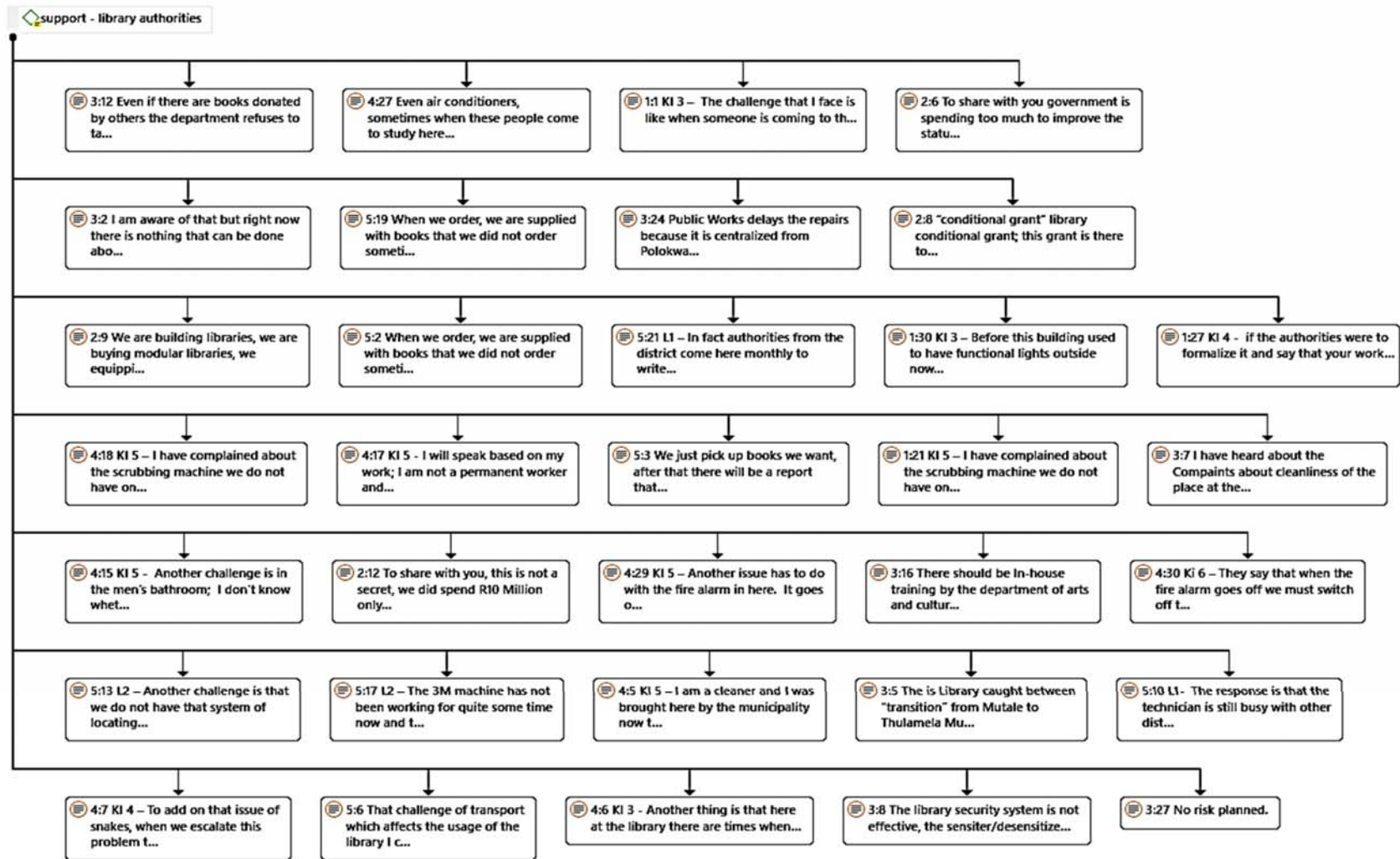


Figure 4.3 Responses on lack of support from library authorities

Also impacting on the relationship between the security and the library users was the infrastructure of the library, which initially did not cater for the proper stationing of the security guards. They were initially occupying the space right at the entrance of the library and would from time to time talk amongst themselves. This was disturbing the library users since the space they were occupying is open. The following excerpt expresses the feeling of the security guards;

“if you so much as whisper they come and shush us as if we are grade R toddlers. They say you people are making noise, it is like you don’t know what the library is all about! And when we say use the rooms in the library they insist on sitting in the open spaces

Library opening hours

The librarians and government officials also revealed that they were aware that the library opening hours were a challenge. They did sympathize with the users’ predicament in as much as both students, learners and workers could not use the library because they did not fit into the set hours during the week and the library was closed on Saturdays. With regards to learners not being able to use the library, one librarian expressed her sentiments as follows;

“Even school children here in Thengwe. Thengwe is a very strict school; they will end up not using this library because they are released around 17h00 and we are already closed at that time and we are also not here during the weekend.”

Figure 4.4 shows linkages to opening hours and how the different respondents have addressed the question. Another government official also indicated that there are plans to use the Thulamela Main library in Thohoyandou as a benchmark. They indicated that the library has been largely successful in offering services to the community and has also started offering library services after the regular workers have gone home and on Saturdays. The two libraries are now being run under the same management since incorporation of the Mutale municipality into Thulamela started. To this end he had this to say;

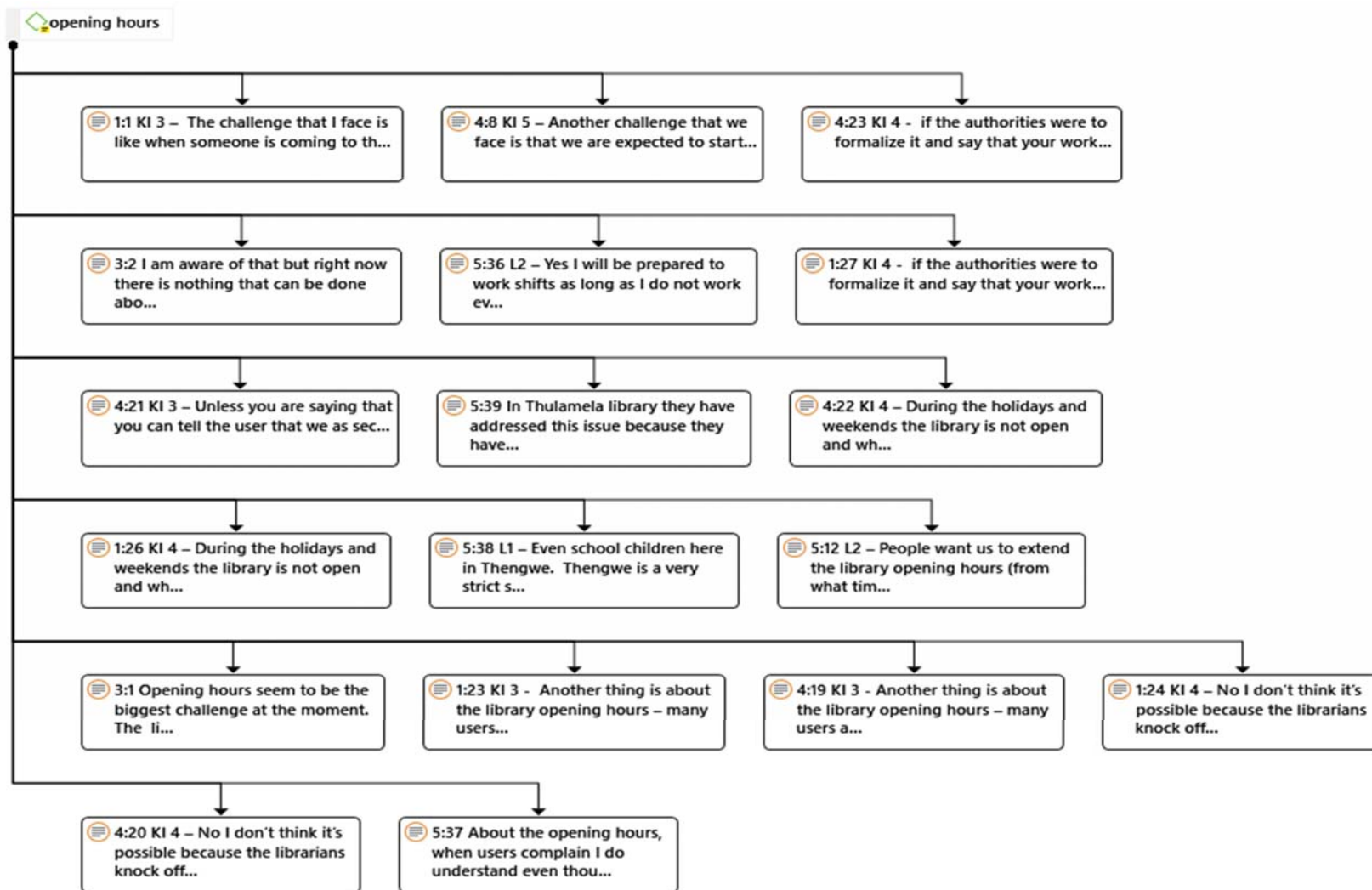


Figure 4.4 Views of key informants on local public library opening hours

“The library in town has been largely successful and are working even after hours. We are planning to utilize the expertise and advice of the librarian there to help us bring the Mutale library to the same standard of operation as this library in Thohoyandou. We will be sending him to spend some time with the librarian there and we are confident he will assist us in turning the library around.”

Funding

Government officials’ indicated that funding is a big challenge. Not that the money was not there but rather how the money was cascaded downwards to the departments who were supposed to use it. In the words of one of the officials;

“A lot of money (120 million) was not used last year (2015) and had to be returned but we do not have enough books and no people were hired; that money could have been used to buy many books and computers and also to hire and pay more staff; as it is in Limpopo we are paid the lowest salaries for those employed compared to Mpumalanga for instance.”

To further expatiate on that another government official also alluded to the shortage of funding in this way:

“This year (2016) we only got 25 million to share among the libraries in Vhembe. The unused money from 2015’s budget (120 million) could have been used to increase the number of staff per library and to extend opening hours especially on Saturday. Staff could work on shifts and the money could cover salaries and training of new staff.”

Continuity of service

A big challenge identified by the security guards was continuity of service when the librarians knock off at 16h30. Figure 4.5 Gives an outline of the sentiments regarding continuity of service. It was evident that since the guards worked day and night in shifts, those users who wanted to

use the library after hours expected the security guards to accommodate them. This was illustrated in the following statements;

“No, I don’t think it’s possible because the librarians knock off at 16h00 or 16h30 and a person comes here and says please teach me how to use the internet and I cannot so that person will be saying that security refused me to use the internet and I am writing tomorrow or I have to write an assignment. Meanwhile I do not know how to assist that person so no I do not think it is possible or wise.”

Infrastructural challenges faced by Support staff

Results from the support staff indicated that this group has unique challenges associated with their day-to-day provision of library services. Among these were the dedicated space for the security guards and malfunctioning ablution facilities for the men, which also impacted on the inter-personal relationship between the security staff and library users. For instance, one cleaner expressed this collusion as follows:

“Another challenge is in the men’s bathroom; I don’t know whether the unit was not built properly or what but the chamber is installed in such a way that when one finishes using it they must press a certain button for the waste to be flushed, but when they do so nothing happens and you find layers and layers of the waste and it renders the bathroom unusable. So when we report this to the authorities they say we must put stones (laughing), we must put stones? When we encourage the men to use the proper toilets instead of the urinal they refuse and we didn’t even have masks to block the smell as cleaners, it is just recently that they brought us some”.

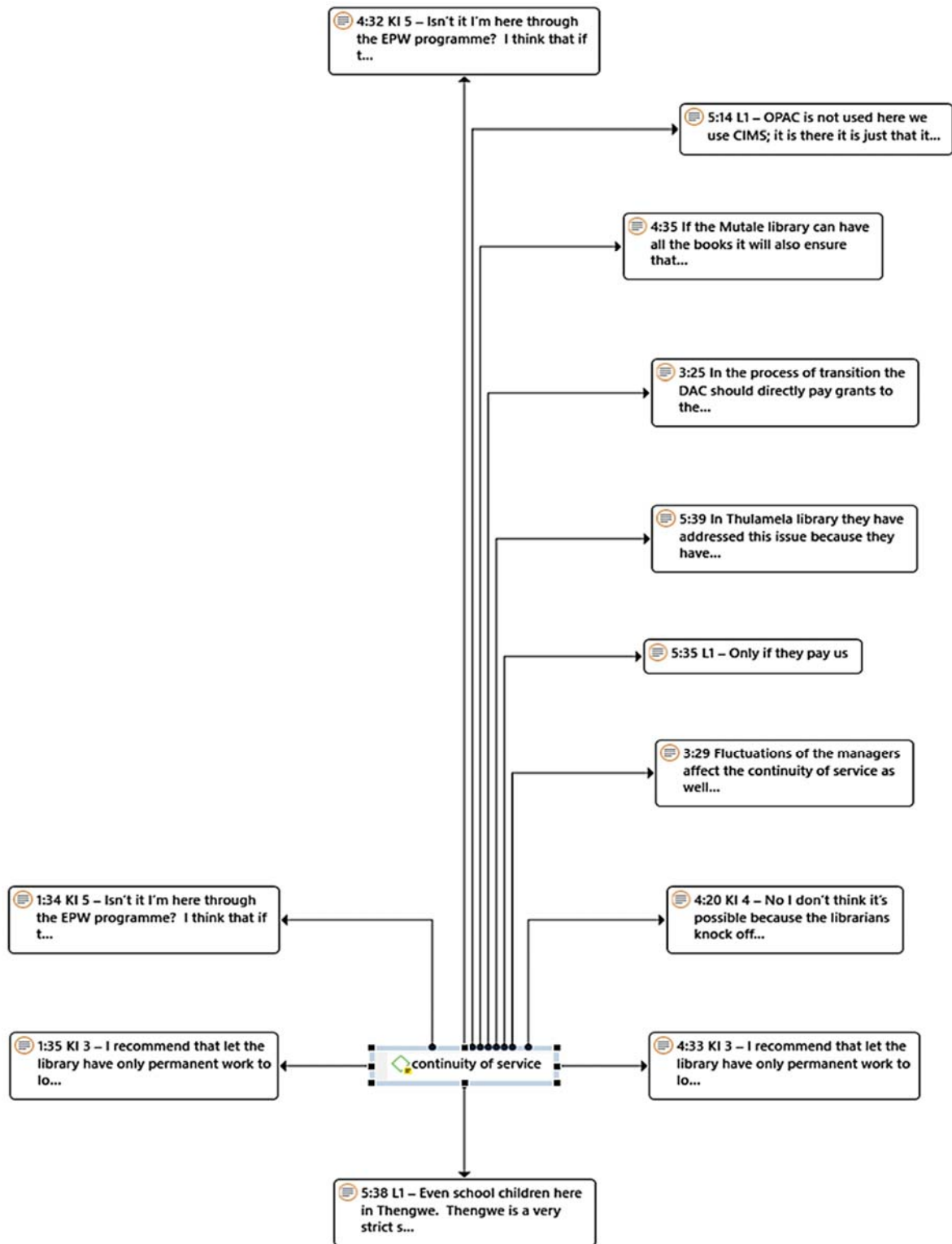


Figure 4.5 Perceptions of key informants on what affects continuity of service

Also impacting on the relationship between the security and the library users was the lack of a dedicated workstation in the library. Initially the library did not cater for the proper stationing of the security guards. They were initially occupying the space right at the entrance of the library and would from time to time talk amongst themselves. This was disturbing the library users since the space they were occupying is open. The following excerpt expresses the feeling of the security guards;

“if you so much as whisper they come and shush us as if we are grade R toddlers. They say you people are making noise, it is like you don’t know what the library is all about! And when we say use the rooms in the library they insist on sitting in the open spaces”

4.3.2 Weaknesses identified by key informants as impeding smooth library operation

When asked what they considered as weaknesses, key informants identified a number of things related to their own specific area of responsibility. Government officials identified weaknesses associated with policy such as funding and operational hours. Librarians and support staff (cleaners and security guards) identified weaknesses in the day to day operation of the library as well as infrastructure-related weaknesses. As an illustration, one librarian alluded to the issue of insufficient reading space as follows:

“Okay even the reading space is very small, sometimes there are far too many people in the library and you find them occupying all the rooms”. (When exactly is the library full?)
“During examinations we are usually very full”

The group also indicated that there is fragmentation in the management of the library as a unit. Cleaners report to one department, librarians to another and yet again security is from an independent outside company contracted by government. Some of the things they were saying in this regards are:

"I am a cleaner and I was brought here by the municipality now the challenge that I face is about toilet papers because the people who deliver the tissues to us tell us that those tissues are meant for their own staff only not for the security or the cleaners, only the librarians".

4.3.3 Library strengths identified by the key informants

Respondents were also asked to identify what they perceived as the strengths of the library and responded accordingly in relation to their line of responsibility in the library. A cleaner advanced the following response:

"I will speak based on my work; I am not a permanent worker and have not worked that long here but at least I am paid on time and also on the deliveries, they deliver the cleaning supplies on time even the toilet papers I was talking about. I do not struggle and even the library users tolerate me if I am sometimes late if I ask them to wait a bit while I'm still cleaning, they listen to me."

When asked what they considered to be the strengths of the library presently, librarians said:

"People can now borrow books" (they couldn't do that before?) "No. when the library first opened we did not lend books for two years".

On further probing as to what has since changed that facilitated the issuing of library materials she revealed the following:

"We did not have a filing system; isn't we were issuing manually? We did not have that filing system on how to issue the books but we have now fixed that. Now we can issue."

(So how are you issuing?) "Manually!" (You couldn't have done that two years ago?) No answer. (You just never thought about it? No answer).

Another response relating to the positive aspects about the library was expressed as follows:

"Uh, access to the internet, and the collections that we have, people are benefiting; like business ... (business what?) Business management and education, there are a lot of educators around here they are benefiting from the collections".

When asked whether internet access is restricted by allocation of time one librarian responded as follows:

"No there are no longer restrictions, people can use it however they want the whole day, like even if there are no restrictions I tell them that no Facebook and pornographic sites".

4.3.4 Recommendations made by key informants that can improve the functioning of the local library

When asked what they could improve the smooth running of the library key informants made some suggestions. Some of the recommendations made by the government officials are:

"In the process of transition the DAC should pay grants directly to the municipalities concerned to ease things. We can't keep on waiting for the district to do things on our behalf and in their own time".

And also as in the following excerpt;

"Fluctuations of the managers affect the continuity of service as well. It will be better if a permanent manager for the library is appointed".

As recommendations on what could make the library be better in future the librarian expressed her suggestions as follows:

“I suggest that there must be a book to write all the needs of the users so that when it comes the time for us to go and select the books, we have a list of what the users have recommended and even if they cut the numbers we will still have at least supplied what is needed by the users. If the Mutale library can have all the books it will also ensure that the library is used more by many people like during the exams; you find it very full and some people sitting outside”.

4.4 Discussion of the Results

The discussion of the findings will be done based on the objectives as set out in chapter one and in the results section above. Numerous and diverse challenges that holistically created an environment that impeded the smooth delivery of public library services were identified. They ranged from funding, shortage of books, ICT support, library opening hours, cleaning-related issues and also those that are security-related. Weakness, strengths and solutions that can potentially improve service provision will also be discussed.

4.4.1 Challenges faced by the library in providing services to users

Public libraries in developing countries usually face challenges in an effort to serve their communities by providing relevant and timely information for individual and communal development. In this study, the biggest challenge identified was inadequate funding, which tends to affect various aspects of service provision in the local library.

Funding

Funding has been identified by numerous other researchers as impacting negatively on provision of library services. Ikenwe & Adegilero-Iwari (2011), Akanwa & Akanga (2018) and Jimma (2014). Government is supposed to provide funding for public libraries. Nkondo *et al.* (2014) lend

support to this, pointing out that government and parent organizations often fail to provide adequate funding for all types of libraries. Recognising the magnitude of this challenge, the South African government has been making efforts to address this problem through the Conditional Grant for Public and Community Libraries. Whereas the grant has made provision for the building and upgrading of existing libraries, the challenges mentioned above need serious attention.

Library Opening Hours

The impact of inadequate funding has affected also the library opening hours, since these have an implication on human resources as well. Presently the library is not able to accommodate a lot of potential users since the opening hours are standard office hours. If library hours are not adjusted to accommodate the majority of the potential users, the community fails to derive any benefits from the public resources. These findings are in agreement with those of Bopape, 2017, Nzivo, 2012 and Omar, 2017 who also found that users were disadvantaged with inadequate library opening hours). These findings are, however, in contrast with those of Oluwaseunfunmi (2015) who found that users In Nigerian libraries were satisfied with library opening hours. This finding is of particular interest since the respondents were youth. Having more youths utilizing the services and resources of the local library could help also in building and developing a literate community.

In this study, it was indicated that because the library opens between 08h30 and 16h30, users expect security guards to take on the role of the librarian after hours as these are available 24 hours. Clearly this cannot address this challenge since security guards do not have the necessary expertise to assist users with accessing information. Moreover, the security of library users and resources will be compromised as the security guards will be focusing on other things not in their line of duty. Appendix G shows adults, youth and children's views on library opening hours.

Contrary to this, Johansen (2012) found that the concept of "open libraries", where the library is staff less after hours and is protected by automated loans and electronic surveillance technologies brought positive spinoffs to Danish public libraries. More library visits by users and more checkout of materials were observed. The implications are that the more hours the library stays open, there more potential there is for more users to patronize the local library and satisfy their immediate information needs.

Inadequate and irrelevant collection

Another major challenge identified by both government officials and librarians was that of inadequate books in the library to meet the needs of the community. Lack of relevant collections that are constantly updated to meet the ever evolving needs of a wide range of stakeholders in their communities is a serious concern. This affects residents of rural areas who are at a disadvantage and often fail to satisfy their information needs. The local library must strive to meet the disparate needs of the community (Hackett, 2018). Many people around Mutale are studying either full time or part time. The local library is the only free place where they can access information to support their studies. This includes learners in the surrounding schools who could also benefit from supplementary materials in the library.

Similar studies conducted by (Iwhiwhu, 2012, Joy, 2014 & Bopape et al. 2017) also found that users were not satisfied with collections at their local libraries. Ikolo (2015) on the other hand found that generally users were satisfied with availability of information sources, particularly reference sources despite the fact that these were not available for loan. Unfortunately in the library under study, developing the collection is beset with other challenges. Books that are acquired have nothing to do with what librarians or the users suggest. This undermines the needs of the users, since their preferences are not taken into considerations when materials are acquired. The resultant situation is frustration, apathy and non-use of the library.

Inadequate ICTs and ICT Support

The challenge of inadequate collections of resources could be addressed by ICTs that function all the time. It was revealed in this study that although there is provision of computers with internet connection in the local library, there are still challenges. The biggest challenge is the lack of ICT support to ensure continuous access to the internet. Coupled with the fact that there are only three computers to serve the whole community, it takes away the potential solution to address the shortage of books and other physical resources in the library.

Availability of functional computers also empowers users in becoming independent in searching for information on their own. The local librarian should train users to search information independently from various sources available in the library and to enhance discoverability of

information resources in the library and on the world wide web (Munshi *et al.*, 2017; Harland, 2018). Similar studies conducted to assess the satisfaction of users with ICTs in their libraries (Joy, 2014; & Tiemo, 2016; Cocchini, 2018; Greenberg & Blake, 2018) also found that users were not satisfied with provisions in their local libraries. This unfortunate occurrence compounds the challenge of shortage of books, which could potentially be tackled by accessing current and relevant information online. The situation also widens the digital divide, since users cannot gain the necessary digital skills necessary to navigate information in today's technology-intensive society. In another study, Francis *et al.*, (2018) found that access to functional computers enabled adult users to tackle the problem of isolation and loneliness as they could socialize online and get expert advise from relevant entities.

Restrictive Library Policy affecting functionality of the library

Many of the impediments to effective functioning of the public library could be tackled by decentralizing operational responsibilities from the district to local municipal level. Such a move emanates from the realisation that quite often authorities at a higher level assign tasks to their staff on a monthly basis to document what needs to be attended to, including lights or computers, yet nothing gets fixed. During the data collection period, workers indicated that ceilings were collapsing, and the internet port in the children's library was not working. None of these were fixed more than two months after a report was sent to senior authorities. It was revealed that the one technician assigned to deal with these issues had numerous responsibilities elsewhere.

Salman (2017), Mamafha & Ngulube (2014) and Downes & Kruger (2017) also found that inappropriate library legislation hampers expected services delivery. Paiva & Ferraz (2018) found that there was a confusion between what functions, target public, collections and services were supposed to be offered by the public library vis a vis the school library. This was because there was no recent policy to guide these two institutions. In this study users are being hampered from realizing the full benefits of accessing information through the internet since problems with access are not addressed immediately when they are reported. The implications are that users might get discouraged from visiting the library, especially if the problem persists for an extended period. The library will therefore not attract potential new users since other users might criticize the library.

Lack of Marketing Activities in the library

Marketing of library services is as important as providing relevant and up-to-date resources (Hardesty, 2016; Mekouar *et al.*, 2017; Bashir, 2018; Yeboah, 2018). Effective marketing helps the library gain clients that are satisfied with the product supplied to them. The library under study was not engaging in any form of marketing of the library and its resources. This has had deleterious consequences on how the library is viewed. The librarian indicated that had the previous authorities been supportive (before incorporation into Thulamela), she could have marketed the library and it would have been known by now. This can still be achieved since she plans to organise a meeting with local stakeholders including civic associations, CBOs, schools, clinics, business people and government departments with a view to document and utilise the information generated to improve the delivery of services. This intervention is long overdue and could prove to be the very thing that ultimately changes the negative perceptions users have about the library and the apathy associated with it. Furthermore, greater interest and usage of the library might result. In their research Ntlotlang & Grand (2015), found that public libraries in Botswana have marketing programmes which include outreach, newsletter and library exhibitions. These interventions are fundamental library marketing practices and could prove useful if adopted by the Mutale library in raising awareness of what is available in the library. Likewise, Stokic (2018) found that generally users were happy with marketing efforts and services in their libraries of Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia.

4.4.2 Library Strengths identified by key Informants

Key informants also indicated that not all was negative. Job satisfaction was cited by one of the cleaners as one of the motivating factors for working in the library. The satisfaction was with the timeous payment of wages as well as timeous supply of cleaning supplies. This finding is line with other researchers who also found an acceptable level of satisfaction among respondents in their studies. Kim & Kim (2018) researched seven factors of job satisfaction and found respondents were happy with their co-workers, the job itself, their supervisors and business affairs. Respondent were however, not happy with their pay and employment terms. Similarly, Jordan (2017) and Chen *et al* (2016) found that generally workers are happy when there is security, reasonable working conditions and enough money. In contrast, Hart (2018) investigated the levels of satisfaction of workers in Cape Town's public libraries and found that branch managers were not happy with the red tape they encountered while trying to render services.

Satisfied workers can ensure continuity to service since they won't constantly be looking for "greener pastures". Also more effort and innovative interventions can evolve from satisfied workers. Well-paid workers generally are more satisfied with their job; and thankfully this provision has been made possible with the paying of the conditional grant for community libraries, which takes care of the salaries of public librarians.

4.4.3 Solutions that can solve library problems

Much as the key informants identified challenges associated with service provision, they were also asked to recommend solutions. Numerous recommendations were advanced which can potentially change the gloom situation if properly attended to by the relevant authorities (Department of Arts and Culture). The recommendations included decentralization of the running of libraries to local municipalities, which can empower the local library to make policies that are accommodative to their particular users. Turnaround time for books acquisitions, repairs and the maintenance of the building and equipment could be shortened. Hiring of staff on a permanent basis was also recommended. This could ensure that the staff do not feel threatened with job losses. In turn they will perform their best on their jobs

4.5 Conclusion

This study proved beneficial in finding out what hinders smooth provision of expected services by the library. It provided an opportunity to obtain and understand challenges of government officials, librarians and support staff who were holistically key informants in the study. The study showed that many challenges hinder the key informants in the day-to-day operations of the library. Identified challenges included inadequate funding, inadequate resources, inadequate opening hours, problems with maintenance of the library, lack of IT support and continuity of service. Tackling the identified challenges would make the library more user-friendly and attract more potential users of the local library. All the concerns raised in this study need to be brought to the attention of the relevant library authorities who are custodians of libraries. The key informants made suggestions themselves on what changes should take place and what interventions should be effected. This might influence the change of some of the restrictive policies which are putting constraints to smooth library operation.

CHAPTER FIVE: ASSESSING USER INFORMATION NEEDS AND SATISFACTION AT A RURAL PUBLIC LIBRARY IN MUTALE, VHEMBE DISTRICT OF SOUTH AFRICA

ABSTRACT

In this study an exploratory design was used to get the perceptions of the respondents and also utilized a survey to determine the level of satisfaction with library services. A sequential approach in the data collection phase was applied, as was also done in the discussion of the results. Qualitative discussion and interpretation preceded the quantitative discussion and interpretation. Sampling for the qualitative study was purposive, for the quantitative study convenience sampling and snowballing techniques were used. Qualitative data were collected using interviews and focus group discussions. All focus groups were age and gender sensitive. Quantitative data were collected through a survey using a Likert-type questionnaire. Data for the qualitative study were analyzed using Atlas.ti version 8 looking at the differences and similarities across the various groups, gender and age. For the survey, data were analysed using SPSS version 24. Captured data were coded according to the levels of measurement and then analysed. Chi square and Cramer's V values were calculated and analysis was set at 0.05 confidence level. Cross tabulations were computed to summarise categorical values of community perceptions on library services and resources. The findings indicated that the majority of the villagers were not using the library. Those who are using the library indicated various challenges including the infrastructure of the library, lack of adequate, relevant and current materials, and inadequate library opening hours. The respondents who are not using the library currently cited lack of consultation when designing projects and implementing changes and a lack of knowledge as to what benefits can accrue from using a library. Chi-square (χ^2) analyses revealed a significant association of marital status, age and distance with frequency of library use ($p < 0.05$), while there was no association of gender ($p > 0.05$) with frequency of library use. Positive response to these challenges could potentially benefit the community and uplift their lives.

Keywords: Access, information services, libraries, marketing, stakeholder consultation, user satisfaction,

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the results of the study to determine whether information needs of the community varies according to age and results of the study to determine the level of satisfaction with library services and resources are presented, interpreted and analysed. The sequential approach followed in the data collection phase was also applied in the description and discussion of the results. Qualitative discussion and interpretation preceded the quantitative discussion and interpretation. The chapter addressed the research questions “Do the information needs of adults, youth and children vary according to age? “What are the levels of satisfaction of adults, youth and children with the services of the local library?

5.2 Research Respondents

As already reported in chapter 3, there were 9 focus groups which were age and gender sensitive who formed part of the first phase. The stratification by age and gender was aimed at getting perceptions across these criteria. Four respondents were engaged in face-to-face interviews. The focus groups included a CBO, a civic structure (*Khoro*), groups of children, youth and adults. More females (80) than males (70) were engaged in this study. The majority of the respondents (118) were either students or learners. It was noted during data collection that most of the people who were willing to participate were either actively engaged in studies, schooling, or had an interest or intention to study further. This might be reason why the sample had more respondents who were active students/learners. In total 150 respondents participated in the study.

One hundred and seventy two respondents participated in phase two of the study from the three villages. Various age groups were represented. Fifty-nine percent of the 172 respondents in the current study were female. Most of them (87%) were single. The rest of them married (11 %), widowed (2 %) and divorced (<1). Most of the respondents in the current study (55 %) were adults, with the respective proportions of youth and children being 30 % and 25 %. Sixteen percent of the respondents were in primary school as opposed to 11 % in secondary school. The rest were in tertiary institutions studying either part-time (2 %) or full time (45 %), working part time (5 %) or full time (9 %) and unemployed (2 %).

Almost half of the 172 respondents (45%) had never used the library. It was revealed that out of those who used the library, 29 % accessed it only a few times in a year. Slightly less than a

quarter (22 %) used the library many times in a week. The rest used it monthly (15 %) and at least once a week (8 %). Approximately, 68 % of the respondents travelled more than 3 km to reach the library. Forty percent of the respondents had used the library for more than two years while 58 (35%) have used it for two or less years. Figure 5.1 presents a visual representation of all respondents in the qualitative study to determine the information whether the needs of adults, youth and children vary according to age. Table 5.1 gives the demographic characteristics of the respondents in the first phase.

5.3 Factors Associated with Library Use

Different age groups advanced different reasons why they were not using the library. It emerged from the focus group discussions with adults that their main reason for not using the library was that they were not consulted before, during and after the library was built. This has left them feeling detached from whatever happens in the library. Youth indicated that the opening hours were not suitable for them as they were at school during the library opening times. Most of the children indicated that they do not know where the library is.

Chi-square (χ^2) test was used to associate age, gender, marital status and distance to the library with the frequency of library use. The $p < 0.05$ was considered significant. Chi-square (χ^2) analyses revealed a significant association of marital status, age and distance with frequency of library use ($p < 0.05$), while there was no association of gender ($p > 0.05$) with frequency of library use. Table 5.2 shows that significantly higher proportions ($P < 0.05$, $P < 0.001$, $P < 0.01$) of respondents residing within 3 kms from the local library saying they use the library more frequently compared to those residing further away. Age and marital status also showed high significant associations with frequency of library use ($P < 0.01$), with more youth and adults indicating that they frequently use the library more than children and more divorced respondents indicating that they use the library more frequently than the other groups.

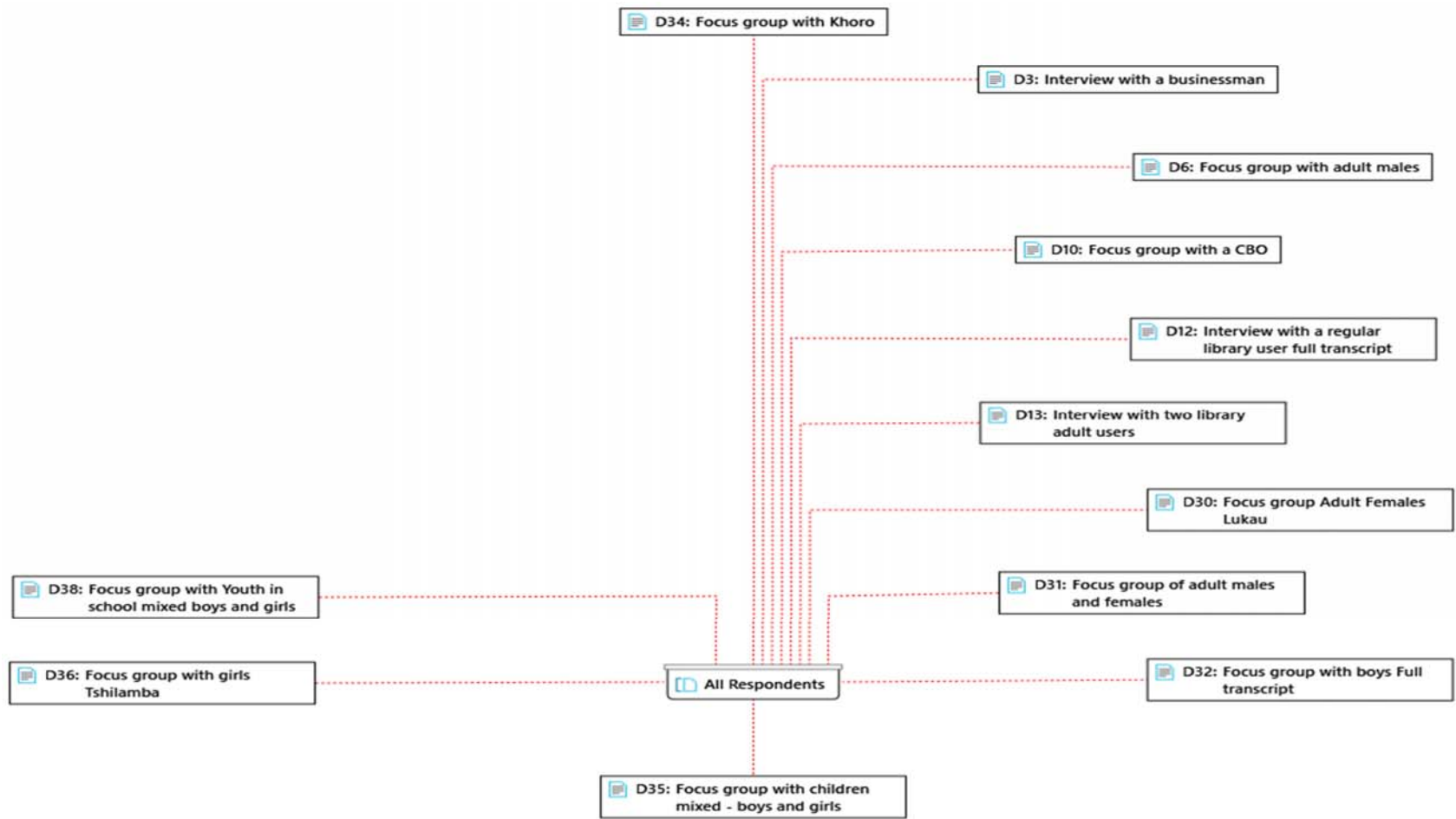


Figure 5.1 Visual presentation of all respondents in the qualitative study

Table 5.1 . Factors associated with library use

Variable		Proportion of respondents (%)					Significance	Cramer's V
		once a week	several days a week	monthly	a few times a year	never used		
Gender	female	5 ^a	21 ^a	12 ^a	28 ^a	33 ^a	n.s	.221
	male	13 ^a	22 ^a	19 ^a	29 ^a	17 ^b		
marital status	single	9 ^a	24 ^a	14 ^a	24 ^a	29 ^a	**	.232
	married	0 ^a	11 ^a	17 ^a	61 ^b	11 ^a		
	divorced	100 ^b	0 ^a	0 ^a	0 ^{a,b}	0 ^a		
age	widowed	0 ^{a,b}	0 ^a	33 ^a	67 ^{a,b}	0 ^a	**	.264
	children	0 ^a	4 ^a	15 ^a	31 ^{a,b}	50 ^a		
	youth	12 ^a	29 ^b	14 ^a	12 ^b	33 ^{a,b}		
Distance	adults	8 ^a	23 ^{a,b}	16 ^a	36 ^a	18 ^b	***	.478
	less than 3kms	86 ^a	54 ^a	16 ^a	29 ^a	11 ^a		
	more than 3kms	14 ^b	46 ^b	84 ^a	71 ^a	89 ^b		

*= P < 0.05, **= P < 0.01,

***= P < 0.001

5.4 Ideal Library Characteristics

Respondents were asked to indicate ideal characteristics which could be useful to them. Table 5.3 shows age based perceptions of an ideal library according to the respondents. Generally respondents unanimously agreed to all the elements of an ideal library as presented in the questionnaire except for the availability of maker spaces (creativity spaces) and the availability of telephone services, where just over 50% of the respondents agreed. Appendix H shows major themes associated with this question reflecting the density of the responses.

No significant differences due to gender were observed for most of the elements of an ideal library except for “Telephone services are available”, “Library services are regularly communicated and marketed to users” and “Library conducts periodic user surveys and uses the results to improve the quality of its services”. Significantly higher proportions ($P < 0.05$ and $P < 0.01$) of males agreed to the statements that “Telephone services are available”, “Library services are regularly communicated and marketed to users” and “Library conducts periodic user surveys and uses the results to improve the quality of its services”, compared to females. No significant differences due to age were observed for all the elements of an ideal library except for “There is ample parking for users”, a significant high proportion of youths and adults ($P < 0.05$) agreed to the statement compared to children.

5.5 Does the library meet users' needs?

In this section, Table 5.4 shows the level of satisfaction with the local library, the resources/aspects were grouped into three themes namely, ICT and availability of information, available services and available amenities. Generally the respondents indicated that they were not satisfied with the ICT and availability of information in the local library. A Chi-square test showed significant associations by age in all the level of satisfaction with all the aspects under ICT and availability of information in the local library. Significantly higher proportions ($P < 0.001$) of adults expressed satisfaction with “Working condition of computers for word processing”, “Adequacy of working computers” and “Internet access using computers” (also supported by Cramer's V values between .3 and .7, showing moderate relationship). With respect to gender, Table 5.3 shows that significant associations by age were observed on the level of satisfaction with ICT and availability of information in the following aspects, “Availability of current books on all subjects”, “Working condition of computers for word processing” and “Internet access using computers”.

Table 5.2 Age based perceptions of an ideal library

Responses	Proportion of respondents perceived as important, % (n=172)			χ^2	Significance
	children	youth	adults		
Has current books on all subjects in stock	100 ^a	88 ^a	86 ^a	4.116	ns
Computers for word processing are readily available and always in good working order	89 ^a	90 ^a	86 ^a	.553	ns
Computers are connected to reliable internet	96 ^a	90 ^a	93 ^a	1.156	ns
A Wi-Fi hotspot for mobile devices is available	96 ^a	79 ^a	80 ^a	3.818	ns
It usually opens for long operational hours	96 ^a	87 ^a	88 ^a	1.506	ns
Chairs in the library are comfortable to use	83 ^a	88 ^a	88 ^a	.327	ns
The library building is always clean, including toilets	92 ^a	92 ^a	92 ^a	.013	ns
There is reliable potable running water	96 ^a	94 ^a	90 ^a	1.236	ns
Ablution facilities have running water and are always cleaned	92 ^a	92 ^a	93 ^a	.161	ns
Staff members are friendly and helpful	88 ^a	90 ^a	95 ^a	1.714	ns
There are maker spaces (creativity spaces)	42 ^a	56 ^a	60 ^a	2.587	ns
The library has meeting spaces	68 ^a	83 ^a	88 ^a	5.636	ns
There is ample parking for users	48 ^a	75 ^{a, b}	77 ^b	8.286	*
The building is of high structural quality	88 ^a	85 ^a	85 ^a	.117	ns
The building is big enough for reading and other activities	84 ^a	90 ^a	87 ^a	.486	ns
Telephone services are available	60 ^a	65 ^a	46 ^a	5.075	ns
Library services are regularly communicated and marketed to users	84 ^a	83 ^a	79 ^a	.526	ns
Users have opportunities to give feedback on services offered by the library	88 ^a	79 ^a	77 ^a	1.465	ns
Library conducts periodic user surveys and uses the results to improve the quality of its services	88 ^a	85 ^a	79 ^a	1.589	ns

*= P < 0.05, **= P < 0.01, ***= P < 0.001 Proportions with similar superscripts are not statistically different from each other

Table 5.3. Gender and age-based perceptions on level of satisfaction with ICT and availability of information

Responses	Proportion of respondents perceived as good/excellent, (count)% (n=172)			Cramer's V	Significance	Proportion of respondents perceived as good/excellent, (count)% (n=172)		Cramer's V	Significance
	Children(n=26)	Youth (n=49)	Adults (n=91)			Females (n=100)	Males(n=69)		
Availability of current books on all subjects	(5)22 ^{ab}	(11)23 ^b	(40)46 ^a	.240 ⁰	*	(43)46 ^a	(14)21 ^b	.252 ⁰	**
Working condition of computers for word processing	(4)19 ^a	(13)28 ^a	(51)59 ^b	.344 ¹	***	(49)53 ^a	(21)33 ^b	.202 ⁰	*
Adequacy of working computers	(3)13 ^a	(13)28 ^a	(46)52 ^b	.314 ¹	***	(43)46 ^a	(22)33 ^a	.130 ⁰	n.s
Internet access using computers	(4)17 ^a	(16)34 ^a	(60)68 ^b	.407 ¹	***	(53)56 ^a	(27)40 ^b	.159 ⁰	*
Wi-Fi hotspot for mobile devices	(4)17 ^a	(11)23 ^a	(37)43 ^a	.226 ⁰	*	(35)38 ^a	(18)27 ^a	.113 ⁰	n.s

*= P < 0.05, **= P < 0.01, ***= P < 0.001; Proportions with similar superscripts are not statistically different from each other; ⁰= no relationship to weak; ¹= moderate relationship; ²= strong relationship; () = count and outside bracket is the percentage

Library Opening Hours

Adult, youth and children expressed a concern about library opening hours. The arrangement at the library was excluding most of the potential users of the library. The opening hours matched the normal working hours for most people and learners and students were usually in class during those hours. The respondents felt that the hours needed to be increased and also that the library should also open on Saturdays. If approached, the community was even prepared to assist by volunteering to work when the library staff knock off. A figure presenting responses on opening hours is attached as an appendix A. One adult was adamant that the library is not yet functional;

“Now this library is not like a public library, it is like a private library. As you can see if you go there now you will find two kids inside”.

Another respondent felt strongly that if staff were really committed to serve the community they would make provision by improvising:

“We are talking about dedication; people who know what they are doing, people who have goals, so there will be a morning session up until 16h00 for those who are available midday and then there will be a session starting in the evening up until 12h00 a.m or even 01h00 because during this time it is peaceful and quiet and a person’s focus is also sharp. It will be like shifts, because the opening hours as they are now it is like they are running a business not a library. BM”

The respondent were so concerned about the hours to the extent that they were also prepared to come in and assist during the times when the librarian is officially off duty:

“If this person who is hired as a librarian feels that the hours will exceed the working hours stipulated by the labour law, isn’t it there is a certain amount of working hours? We as citizens would volunteer the extra hours and we would be doing this to cater for our children so that they are able to use the library from 16h30 up to maybe 19h00.”

Attitude of library users towards staff

The attitude of users towards staff was for the most part negative. The community seemed to feel that the librarian did not know what she is doing. This was inferred from the following statement which showed that the library was not properly marketed:

“Now this library is not like a public library, it is like a private library. As you can see, if you go there inside now you will find only two kids”

“It is meeting the needs of the person who is employed so that she can get paid” KH7”

Human Resources and related issues

Issues relating to human resources encompassed cleaners, security staff as well as library staff. Results indicated that the community wants to have a say in who was employed in the library;

“The community around the library could have like a sort of responsibility over the running of the library it would cater for people uh uhm and also include the running hours would also be prolonged because people would not be concerned about getting in and getting out, yeah. LU2” I think that if a person who is not a Muvenda is working here, even a white person, it might be better and the library can be heavily utilized because some people still have that belief that “mukhuwa ndi mushonga” – a white person is a solution. All in all what I am saying is that it is easier for workers who are not from around here to discipline users if they are not towing the line. “AD 7”

“The library should also have security. Isn’t you know that crime is rife? So one can find oneself sitting inside the library and criminals just come in and demand cellphones, necklaces and purses, so security should be tight inside the library.

Reasons for not using the library

Different age groups advanced different reasons why they were not using the library. It emerged from the focus group discussions with adults that their main reason was that they were not consulted before, during and after the library was built. Figure 5. This has left them feeling detached from whatever happens in the library. Youth indicated that the opening hours were not suitable for them as they were at school during the library opening times. Most of the children indicated that they do not know where the library is.

Apathy

Respondents showed some detachment from the library as they felt that since it was 'imposed' they did not want to have anything to do with it;

"I have never been inside that library, maybe it is because of anger seeing that we were not involved in the building of that library (sarcastic laugh) so if I was not engaged when the library was built I have this belief that it was no meant for me as an individual."

Management of the library

It was apparent that according to the community, the library was not well managed as issues relating to marketing and stakeholder consultation kept on creeping up during the focus group discussions with the respondents. Children were either not aware of the library and/or did not know exactly what transpired inside the library and the potential benefits that could accrue by visiting the library. Figure 5.2 showcases the responses to marketing issues related to the library.

"I think uh uh the library should uh, the library itself should organise things like events, you know just so that even people who have never been here before can feel free to come, you know on Saturdays we should have writers block you know"

""Popularise (market) the building so that people know what it is and how is it useful. This is very urgent!" KH4"

"My brother here does not even know what a library is; maybe he would have long learnt something by coming here and even have developed himself somehow you see? But information is not out there and those who utilize this library they can see that it is not helping them that much in their lives so when they go out they talk negatively about the library you see? So ...AD 7"

"We do not know how the library works because when the library was built the community was not consulted so we do not know what to do there. KH4"

"Information should have come to the khoro first because it has the ability to reach the masses in the community; people will be in the know as to what is a library and how does it function. KH6"

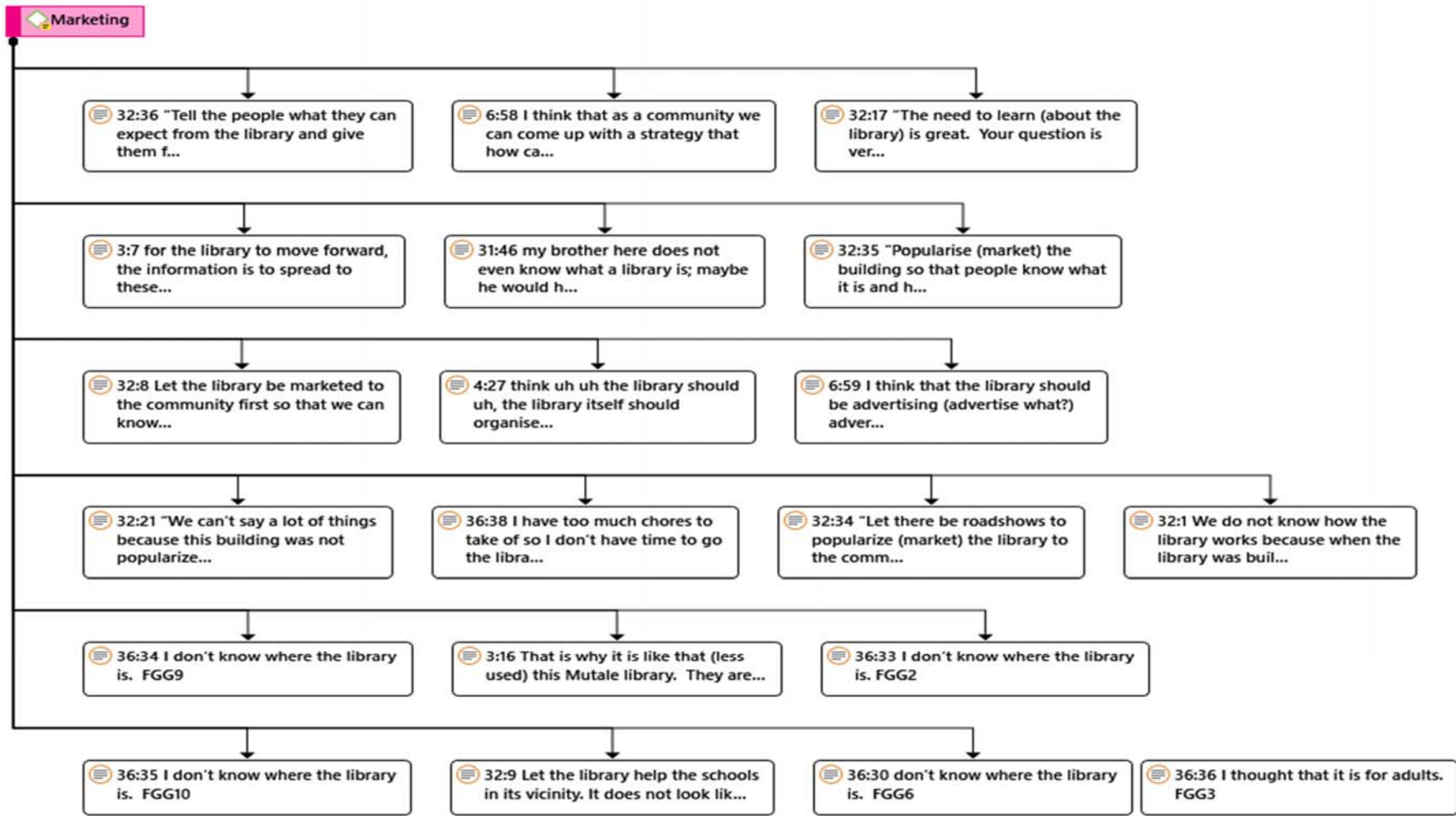


Figure 5.2 Adults, youth and children's responses in relation to marketing of the library

“think that those people who are going to bring improvement of the library must first get suggestions from the users of the library because they can’t just do something without asking the users what are their needs. ADM6”

“The library was conceived by the municipality without any consultation with the community so now we do not see the importance of that library; we did not have an input.” KH7

Unavailability of information

Libraries are synonymous with availability of all kinds of information. When asked if the information they needed was readily available in the library, adults, youth and children gave various reasons why they felt information was not available. The responses from the focus groups showed that users have perceptions of the library not having enough information; whether it is coming from books, other materials in the library or information they would get if they search themselves from the Internet using library computers. Figure 5.3 shows factors that associated with the unavailability of requisite information needed by adults, youth and children.

Some of the responses advanced by the participants were:

“Up and coming entrepreneurs also do not have the necessary gadgets to access the internet. They very much need the library; very much. BM”

“One would expect the library to have study guides, videos, yeah yeah all these materials that high schoolers are using like uh, yeah like what happens if a person doesn’t have the study guides of what they are going to write about?”

“The library should have different information not only pertaining to the locals but that which will broaden our knowledge for example wood to us locals is all about energy but there is so much more you can do with it so such information is also necessary to keep in rural libraries. CB 1”

“I want to add to that, here in Mutale we are a population of about 250 000 (actually it’s only 81 000 according to the last census – 2011) but there are only three computers; let’s just say that we have 5000 00 learners, but I only see three computers (laughing) I think the library is too small or maybe this was just a test library they will add to it later? AD 6”

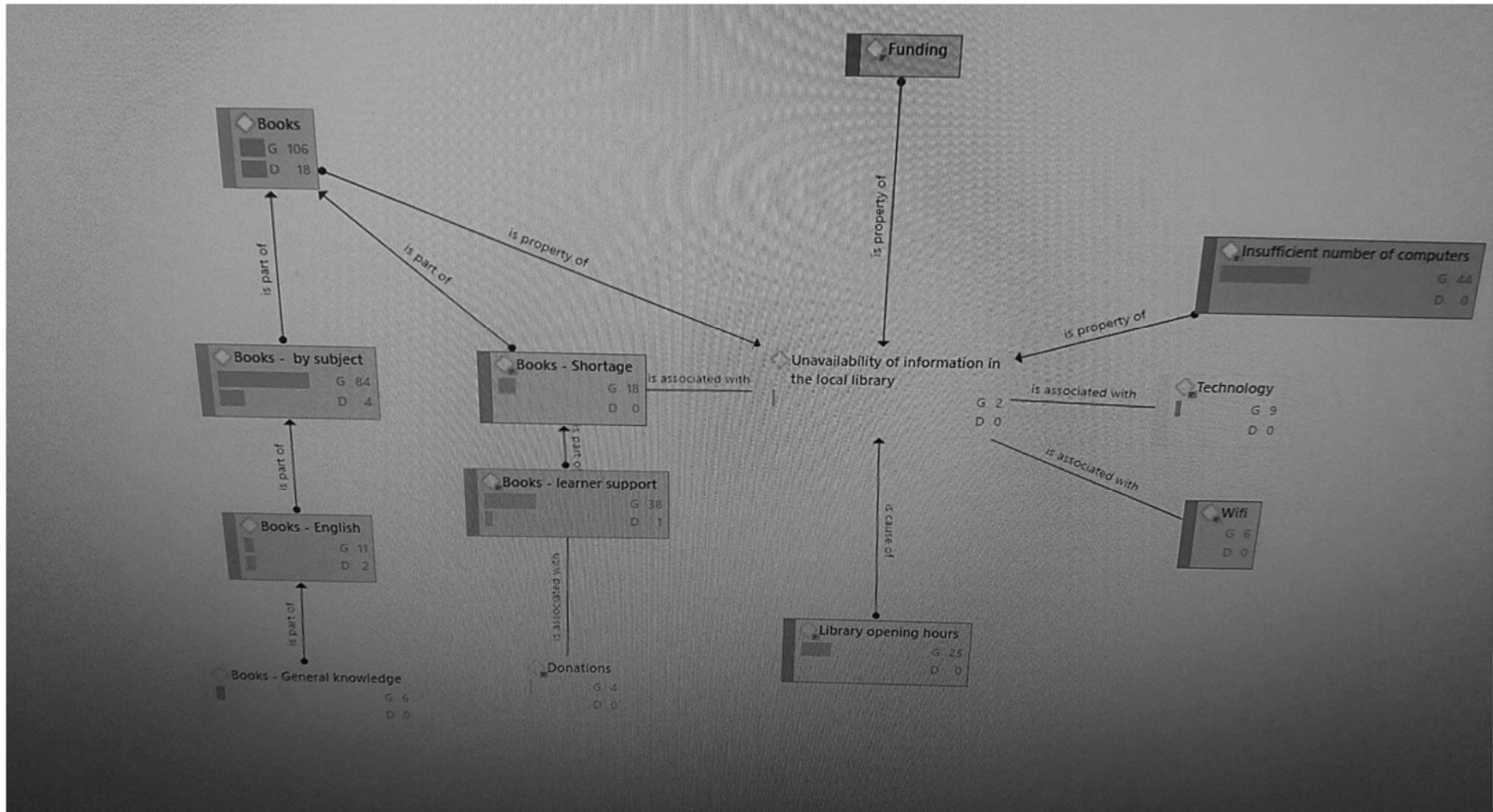


Figure 5.3 Factors associated with unavailability of information in the local library

A large number (106) of respondents indicated that they needed books depending on their own individual needs. These ranged from books on different subjects (which attracted 95 responses) and was followed by books for learner supported with thirty eight responses. The fourth largest response related to books was indicating shortage as eighteen respondents categorically stated that there was a shortage of books in the library. Information about the kind of books that the community would like to see in the library is attached as an appendix at the end of the chapter. Significant differences due to age were observed on “Current books on all subjects”, “Major reference works such as Encyclopaedias and dictionaries”, “Books on arts and crafts”, “Audio-visual materials” and “Electronic databases”. No significant differences due to gender were observed on all aspects on availability of materials except for “Children’s materials”. Except of the perception on availability of “Current books on all subjects” which showed a moderate relationship with age (based on the Cramer’s V value) all the other aspects which showed a significant association by age and gender demonstrated a weak relationship as shown by Cramer’ V values (less than 0.3)

Challenges relating to library Infrastructure

Respondents indicated a number of challenges affecting the soundness of the library infrastructure (Figure 5.4. shows the incidence of responses related to infrastructure challenges). These included the library building itself, which some deemed small, unattractive and without proper amenities that could potentially attract users. Issues relating to the maintenance of the library were raised by adults and youth, with youth citing malfunctioning computers, while the adults pointed to drooping ceiling, unavailability of water and under-serviced library equipment. The following excerpts were identified as relevant here:

“Another thing when we talk about infrastructure I see a very small building because the space is small and if there are many people using the library it will be congested” KH2”

In contrast, another adult felt that the library building was up to standard as the air-conditioning was working and felt that it was something positive to raise the status of the library building. This is what he said:

“I think the structure as it is good, uh is good given the fact that uh, the temperature as it is uh, is also optimized, it adds another point to it.”

Although less than five years old, the library has been deteriorating because of lack of proper maintenance or intermittent servicing of broken gadgets and ageing structure. The following response bore testament to these assertions:

“When it is raining the library has a bad smell afterwards, this shows that there is no proper maintenance. KH4”

“Given the fact that the library has not been here for a long time, it has not been operative for a long time so there is still space for development especially if input like these are being given so that uh, uh they could be attended to.”

Another consideration when it came to library infrastructure was the availability of amenities that could make library users and potential users feel “at home” when using the library.

“It is very important that the public library should have water at all times so it is recommended that the public library should have tanks of water to service the library users”

Safety and security

Safety of library users when they go to the library, when they are inside the library and when they return to their homes was a source of concern for some of the respondents. They felt that there should be enough security to take care of them when they are in the library and voiced a concern for what could potentially happen on their way to and from the library. For this reason, they had a lot to say about this concern:

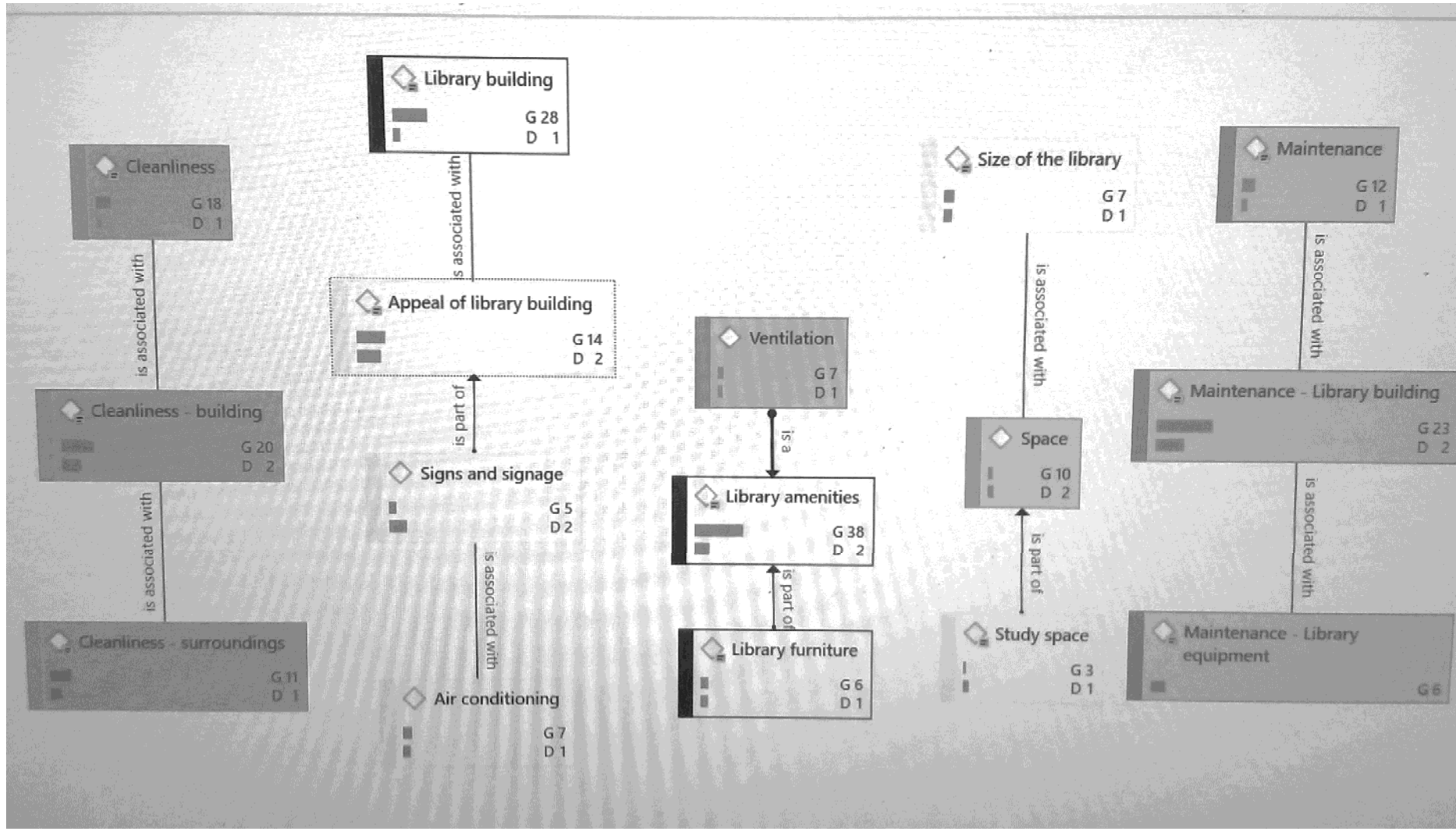


Figure 5.4 Incidence of Infrastructure-related challenges as perceived by adults, youth and children

“An ideal library should be hazard-free; by that I mean that if one is in the library one shouldn’t be constantly looking outside through the window thinking that something untoward might happen at any time, maybe a fire might just break or the roof just cave in; I say this because one day I was there and I thought the roof is going to fly off the building because there was a roofing sheet which was ‘peeling’ away so the library must create a safe environment for the people who are visiting. CB 1”

One of the children also pointed to a need for there to be security for users in the library:

“There must be a security protecting children. FGG9”

5.6 Community views on ideal Characteristics of a librarian

The results showed that a librarian is perceived by the library users and the community at large as an important connection between the users and the available information in the library. As such, the person should be knowledgeable and welcoming, these two characteristics were mentioned more than the others (16 and 10) respectively. Other ideal characteristics that attracted more mentions were friendly and service oriented (9) and approachable with 8 responses. Users think they can feel at ease to ask for assistance and know that they will get the information they need. Adult, youth and children’s illustrative responses depicting the other characteristics like those depicting service orientation follow;

“A librarian should be available at all times, we should not wait for him for more than one hour. If he is on lunch there should be someone working on his behalf. Service must be continuous – whether he is there or not!”

Another respondent said this about a librarian who is supposed to be equipped with the necessary skills of the trade;

“In short she must not be ‘blank’ – unknowledgeable and unresponsive to my needs, telling me go inside there and look you will find what you are looking for.”

5.7 Solutions to challenges identified by adults, youth and children

Although there were many challenges identified by the respondents with respect to factors that were hindering their access and militating against smooth interactions between the users and librarians, the users still felt that there were remedies that could still be employed in order for the library to benefit the community.

“I’ve heard people say that if you need information you must go to the library. So it means that the library is supposed to have all services offered in a public library and all resources such as computers so that one day if I need information about history or something else that I like I must be able to go on the internet or if someone would like to do an assignment they must not waste time searching the whole library; they must be able to go search in a relevant place, that would make a perfect library”

“I think if they like (sic) ask us what we need, yeah in order to improve library it will be better. We must make suggestions on what they must improve on, yeah. ADM1”

“Uh I think on the shortage of books, I think like rural libraries must adapt to e-learning, they should produce e-books, uh I think download or buy books online or at bookshops in order to accommodate everybody and also import and export books from other countries. ADM1 And for the public library to be more interesting, I think there should be a TV or big screen whereby if you are tired by academic work you can view documentaries of those scientists like vho-Newtons so that you can get encouragement easily and then go back and study again. ADM3”

Respondents felt that an ideal library has all the basic amenities. Respondents’ perceptions of amenities that constitute an ideal library showed no significant differences due to age for all perceptions except “There is ample parking for users”. More youths and adults seemed to agree on the importance of ample parking space compared to children, even though a Cramer’s V value of 0.2 showed a weak relationship between age and the perception on the availability of ample parking space. A Chi-square test, indicated no significant association between gender and

perceptions on all aspects on available amenities of an ideal library. (Figure 5.5 shows the Mutale library collection and reading space; Figure 5.6 shows the library computer room with internet connection and Figure 5.7 shows the children's section in the library)

5.8 Discussion

Discussion of the findings will be done based on the objectives of this study. The demographic information of the respondents shows that there are certain factors associated with library usage. These relate to age, gender and distance travelled from home to the library. A library is only useful to the community it serves if it can be fully utilized to meet the information needs of the people served and also justifies its existence to the funders (in this instance the government). In this study, it is evident that more females than males visit the library. Likewise, more adults than youth and children visit the library. This might be because the library is less known to certain segments of the society; specifically to males, youth and children. This is indicated in the responses as some of adults males indicated that it is important for the library to be marketed and made known to all and with its related benefits to the community. The reason children are not using the library is that most do not know what is available.

Marketing of library services is of utmost importance (Perrin, *et al.*, 2018; Suki, 2017; Dauda, 2018) and in this study it has been shown that making the library known to the community is urgent. These findings are in line with those of studies conducted by Bopape (2017), Mojapelo (2018), Strand (2016) and Cavallero (2017). The library has the potential to be the hub of the community and satisfy those needs if only it could market itself properly. For instance, there are several schools around its locality and one of them is featured prominently yearly in the national list of best-performing schools. If the library were to partner with local schools and offer services targeted for learners, this could really put its image and level of operation to another level. In this way, the library could even get to know about the urgent needs of the learners and respond accordingly. This approach could further be cascaded to other users and (potential users) such as tertiary institutions students by forming partnerships with the institutions the students are registered with.



Figure 5.5 The library collection and reading space



Figure 5.6 The library computer room with internet connection



Figure 5.7 The children's section in the library

It also emerged that respondents have perceptions on what characteristics an ideal library should have. Library users need to feel comfortable when they are in the library. For this reason, it is important that the amenities available to them are of an acceptable standard. In this study it was revealed that basic amenities such as potable water and proper functioning ablution facilities are a source of concern for the users. The respondents also indicated that information should be available in the form of books or through online resources on the internet. For this reason, internet access, enough computers and IT support are some of the ideal characteristics identified by the respondents in the study.

Similar studies conducted by Ikenwe (2014), Mamafha & Ngulube (2014), Cecchini (2018) and Wu et al., 2018 also support the findings of this study by pointing out that where there are shortages of books in a library the internet has the potential to even out the deficiency by ensuring users get relevant and current information from a variety of resources online. However, the findings of Mairaj *et al* (2014) did not agree with that of this study as they showed that users were satisfied with the collection available in the library even though they could not loan some of the books.

On the issue of whether information is available in the local library responses given by the respondents show that funding is the overarching problem for the library not having the requisite information. It has a spill-off effect on other aspects of service provision such as inadequate opening hours, availability of enough computers, Wi-Fi as well as books as specified by categories according to users' preferences. The biggest issue with funding in the local library is not that there are no funds but rather how these are made available for efficient functioning of the library. The fact that the funds are administered from the district, controlled from there is a challenge. It hinders smooth acquisition of resources and in particular the building of the book collection.

Local administration of the allocated funds can cut out the unnecessary red tape which makes the turnaround time for book acquisition too long, with irrelevant books supplied with disregard to users' preferences. The resultant situation is that even when there are some books added to the collection, these are not necessarily suggested by users or selected by the librarians as the districts makes the selections. These findings differ with the results from a study conducted by Kaur & Walia (2015) who found out that books covering various subjects including those catering

to children were generally available in the surveyed public libraries of India. These researchers also found out that even though the library collection exceeded the IFLA standard of 2 to 3 items/capita (Koonts & Gubbin, 2012), the library membership was still very low (0.6% of the total population). Similarly, a study by Kelly (2015) points to a lack of explicit pronouncements on how collections in Australian public libraries are developed to support various information needs of users.

There were also areas where only adult groups felt strongly about certain issues. During the focus groups with adult groups it became apparent that one of the reasons, if not the main reason why the library is not heavily utilized presently because the community was not consulted when the library was first built. In view of that, the community seems to have adopted a stance that since they were not consulted during the planning stages of the library and when the library was being stocked with information resources, they will make sure that they do not recognize it.

Other researchers have shown the importance of stakeholder consultation (SC) in community development projects (Tshitangoni & Francis, Yalegama *et al.* 2016; Skinner, 2018; Sung & Hepworth, 2018). The community indicated that not even the community structures such as *Khoro* were consulted, which would have made the library known to the community from the beginning as well as what benefits would be derived from having such a structure in the community. Goulding (2009) and Blackburn (2017) also found in their studies on public libraries and citizen engagement that libraries could contribute more towards community capacity building instead of just engaging them in simpler forms of community engagement such as surveying their opinions.

Library opening hours were also a concern across all the respondents. The main problem here is that the library is open from 08h30 – 16h30 and is closed on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays. During these times the learners and students are either at schools or institutions of higher learning. Similarly the adults are at work and by the time the library closes they together with learners and students are only arriving from their different activities. So in the end the hours never accommodate them. There are several factors which influence decision towards longer opening hours (Engstrom *et al.*, 2017; . Ravenwood *et al.* (2015) state that with the advent of group work and collaborative style of learning among the learners and students this dictates totally different library spaces which encompass informal learning spaces, group work and also socializing. This

might be the reason users value convenient opening hours, which will of necessity be during unsocial hours such as evenings and weekends (Ravenwood *et al.*, 2015).

Other factors might not make the decision to implement longer opening hours possible. These include amongst others, funding structures of libraries, which in turn have an impact on staffing levels and security issues for both library and for library users in the area where the library is located. A study conducted by Lawrence (2012) showed that students prefer the quietness and comfortability of the library at unconventional hours (12h00 to 02h30). This could benefit most students in the Mutale area and those who are working, were the library to open for extra hours.

These findings are in line with those of Mamman (2015) who also found out that users in Nigerian public libraries are not happy with ICTs provision in their local libraries. These findings, however, differ slightly with that of the present study in that library ICT provisions in the Nigerian libraries also included printers, scanners, projectors, Audio visual equipment, photocopiers and digital cameras. These are not available in the Mutale library, and these are some of the most basic forms of ICT's that must be provided by a public library.

Infrastructural challenges are also a cause for concern, particularly since the library is still in its infancy. The fact that ceilings are already on the verge of falling and ablution facilities are unpleasant to use already three years since the library opened its doors to the public is tragic. It points back to funding problem. If there were dedicated funds for this purpose, repairs would have been done timeously and the comfort of the users would not have been compromised. The conditional grant that made it possible for this library be built could hardly be expected to fund these repairs since more libraries still need to be built and others which are much older renovated. Therefore, the DAC should ensure that these repairs are done in time and not continue to leave parts of the library in a broken state. The end result might be a library that is in disrepair because the problems will just compound.

Another issue that was a concern is IT support. The fact that there are only three computers for all the users necessitates that those computers should always be in a functioning condition. The present situation of one IT technician coming from the district's office in Polokwane is not ideal as there are lengthy delays in attending to IT problems. This can affect the usage of the library

because if users are coming from far and they have spent money on transport, it might be discouraging to keep on coming back when the problem with the computers or the internet connection is not attended to. These findings are in consonance with the results of a study conducted by Mphidi (2016) in which he investigated strategies to bridge the digital divide in South African public libraries. His findings were that there is no dedicated ICT support department in any of the provinces. In some provinces, ICT support is provided by external service providers, whereas in some provinces libraries depend on their parent institution (Provincial DAC). As the librarian is the contact person in the library, it is also necessary that she acquires the skills in basic trouble-shooting of some of the problems, and not wait for the technician. This is also in line with findings of Mphidi (2016) who recommended constant training and retraining of librarians as well as users in the usage of ICTs. This calls then for the librarian to be constantly trained so that if there are developments she is also on board with any changes which can be passed on to the users. In another study, Cobblah & Van der Walt found that additional incentives such as rewards and promotions are needed in addition to training and development of librarians in order to ensure effective library service provision.

Usually the librarians who are hired in rural public libraries are fresh from library school and are thrown into “the deep end” without the requisite practical experience. Ideally the person should have some basic practical skills related to the running of rural public libraries. To this end, these librarians should be attached to libraries with experienced staff who will be able to induct them on how the library works. Nwabueze & Anike (2016) found that participating in a formal orientation programme capacitates newly qualified librarians to be more effective in their job. Newly qualified librarians could also participate in sponsored conferences, workshops or/seminars where an “induction” of what is happening in the LIS field is offered. LIASA through its annual conference offers an opportunity for newly qualified librarians to have a dedicated session, where they are familiarized with the practical side of the library industry. Getting some experience from established libraries can also enable newly qualified librarians to acquire the soft skills which are necessary to deal with diverse users. These skills were also identified by the adults, youth and children who indicated knowledge, friendliness, helpfulness and approachability as some of the ideal characteristics that the person should have.

5.9 Conclusion

This study proved beneficial in showing the type of information needed by the community. It also showed that there were gaps in the collections available in the library since many alluded to the need for more information covering different subjects. Access to internet was also identified as important. The community felt that should information not be available in hard copies it could be supplemented or augmented by online information. The challenge, however, is that there are few computers to service the whole community. Coupled with this is the challenge of IT support which was shown to be lacking and impacting on the way in which services were being provided. The study also revealed that it is important for the person employed as the librarian to be knowledgeable and welcoming. This will ensure that the users' needs are well taken of and users are not afraid to approach the person for assistance should there be a need to do so. A lot of recommendations from the respondents were given, which if implemented, could ensure that information needs of the community are taken care of and the library it is used by many people. Therefore, better funding structure, well-trained librarians, better IT support, better maintenance of the library are recommended in this study.

CHAPTER 6 SYNTHESIS OF THE FRAMEWORK FOR ENHANCED FUNCTIONALITY OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES AS HUBS OF INFORMATION FOR RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

6.1 Introduction

In rural areas of South Africa, various challenges limit the provision of information to local communities. More than 20 years after attainment of democracy, distribution of libraries is still skewed in favour of urban communities (Satgoor, 2015; Bopape, 2017, Hart, 2017). Apart from there being few libraries widely dispersed in rural communities, the provisions in them are inadequate to meet the developmental information needs of the target populations. The current study was premised on the argument that despite government investment in building more libraries in rural areas and also developing existing ones, satisfaction surveys (Witbooi 2018; Bopape *et al.*, 2017) reveal the existence of concerns that reflect low levels of functionality as the libraries fail to satisfy the diverse needs of individuals and various institutions within the areas where they are located. Studies conducted in some rural communities (Hart & Nassimbeni, 2016; Bopape *et al.*, 2017) have unearthed a range of shortcomings of library provisions. This study adds to the body of knowledge by making recommendations on how these can be overcome in order to improve the functionality of libraries. Thus, the main purpose of the current study was to develop a framework for enhanced functionality of public libraries in rural areas. This was done through a) determining the challenges faced by the library in providing services to adults, youth and children, b) determining whether the information needs of adults, youth and children differ according to age and c) assessing the level of satisfaction of adults, youth and children with library services.

In this chapter, the major facets of the study are restated and discussed. The methodological issues that added value to the study and major results are interrogated further before recommendations for further research to deepen knowledge on functionality of rural public libraries are made. Some national imperatives relevant to the study are brought into focus again in order to establish the domains that the current study impacts on. Table 6.1 is a synthesis of the study in which the issues that hampered the local library from rendering services to the residents of rural communities in the Mutale area of Vhembe District were explored and explained.

Table 6.1 Synthesis of the study on a framework for enhanced functionality of public libraries as hubs of information for rural community development

Context: The Department of Arts and Culture (DAC) in South Africa introduced a “conditional grant for community and public libraries”, aiming to refurbish existing libraries and build new ones. Mutale public library received funding through the same grant. This study originated from the need to understand whether it was meeting the demand for information for personal and community development. Such information would then be used for the basis for reconfiguring it so that it serves as a true community resource.

Aim: To develop a framework for enhanced functionality of public libraries as hubs of information for community development in rural areas

Objectives and key findings	Implications for rural development	Governance interventions suggested	Contribution to LIS
<p>Objective 1: To identify the challenges public libraries face in rendering services to children, youth and adults</p> <p>a) Centralized library services run from district level b) Inadequate funding of libraries c) Inadequate library opening hours; and d) Lack of ICT support.</p>	<p>Unhindered provision of service to the rural communities likely</p> <p>High quality services responsive to the timely needs of the community rendered</p>	<p>Decentralize running of libraries to local municipalities to limit hindrances;</p> <p>Improve turnaround time and customise services to local needs;</p> <p>Improve ways of funding libraries;</p> <p>Review library policies and enhance access to resources</p>	<p>Identified factors mitigating against red tape which hampers smooth running of services.</p>
<p>Objective 2: To determine whether the type of information local residents need for personal use and community development varies according to age</p> <p>a) Library needs a variety of information resources to satisfy individual and community needs b) The library is not meeting those needs presently; there is a shortage of resources of all kinds for all age groups c) Users recommended traits that a librarian should possess including knowledgeable and friendly in order to serve them well d) inadequate opening hours restrict many potential adults, youth and children from accessing the library</p>	<p>Better access to resources and user-friendly opening hours result in better decisions for personal and rural community development. Involving users when making decisions relating to running the library and how it is resourced can popularize it. This will build a sense of ownership and thus make the library a true hub for the community as users get relevant information through it.</p>	<p>Review of the framework for governance of public libraries and decentralize power to local municipalities to determine own opening hours;</p> <p>Adopt a customer-driven approach to acquisition of library resources.</p>	<p>Pillars that enhance functionality in rural library services identified</p>
<p>Objective 3 To determine the level of satisfaction of adults, youth and children with library services</p> <p>a) Fewer people in the community (45%) used the library, with only 22% using it several days a week. b) Adults, youth and children had the same views regarding type and availability of information needed, and amenities and level of satisfaction with services rendered. c) Crammer's V tests demonstrated a weak relationship among the above variables (Crammer's values of <0.3 to 0.30)</p>	<p>Marketing the library and its services likely to boost the number of visitations to it.</p> <p>More books on different subjects should be acquired to satisfy individual and communal information needs.</p>	<p>Review the framework governing public libraries, specifically focusing on opening hours, funding structure which affects shortage of books, insufficient ICT infrastructure and IT support</p> <p>Empower local municipalities to acquire books, which reduces red tape; The library should determine its own opening hours and put in place</p>	<p>Quality services that ensure user satisfaction and maximal usage of libraries.</p>

More computers with internet connectivity contingency plans to ensure continuity of services must be installed, coupled with better IT when regular staff members are not on duty. support to lessen disruptions.

Conclusions

- a) Restrictive policies make it difficult for library authorities to provide reliable and efficient services to users;
 - b) Adults, youth and children have information needs pertaining to their particular economic activity, for example school, work and community, among others. The library was failing to meet the needs mainly due to insufficient materials, internet connectivity bottlenecks and inadequate opening hours, amongst others.
 - c) Adults, youth and children were equally unsatisfied with library services
 - d) An enabling environment for libraries could make it possible for the library to cater for the information needs of all segments in the community thereby ensuring functionality of the local public library
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6.2 Methodological Issues

The study was situated in the interpretivist tradition for the first phase, based on it being exploratory in nature. During the second phase, a positivist tradition was adopted. An exploratory sequential mixed methods design (Figure 6.1) was used. The ecological framework (Asselin & Doiron, 2014) underpinned collection of primary data. This framework was further strengthened by the Library and Information Service (LIS) charter (Nkondo *et al.*, 2014), which is based on the ecosystem paradox. The qualitative and quantitative research paradigms were used in succession. A qualitative phase comprising two studies, one targeting key informants and the other adults, youth and children, was exploratory in nature. It preceded the quantitative phase.

Results from the first phase informed the second one, also adults, youth and children serving as respondents. It was imperative that all interest group be represented in this study so that a comprehensive database of the community needs could be established. Based on the information needs identified, the relevant information resources and services could then be provided, with no-one left out. The sequential mixed method approach was appropriate because it sought to overcome weaknesses of utilizing one approach (Creswell, 2003). Furthermore, it laid a good foundation for use of multiple approaches to data collection, analysis and interpretation. This triangulation of data source and methodology minimized inadequacies found in one source as confirmation could be achieved using multiple sources. In this study, the qualitative results were cross checked by use of the survey questionnaire, which gave credence to the validity and reliability of the findings (Clifford *et al.*, 2008).

The Asselin & Doiron (2014) ecological framework used in this study has four components, which if well-coordinated would ensure that the library serves as a hub of information and knowledge essential for personal and community vitality. It places the library at the centre of community life, subsuming that there is something for everyone in it. The public library forges meaningful partnerships with agencies that lead development. Among the latter are schools, community-based organisations (CBOs), government departments and other players. For this reason, it was crucial to assess its effectiveness and provide resources to match community needs at all times. This expectation made it imperative to consider the Library and Information Services (LIS) Charter in the course of the assessments. Hart & Nassimbeni (2014:7) point out that LIS Charter embraces the ecosystem paradigm, which “acknowledged diversity while encouraging mutuality, inter-dependence and collaboration”. Given that the Charter provides the basis for structuring

library services, the framework for enhanced functionality proposed in this thesis was anchored on it. There is need to restate that the framework was a product of a series of studies (Figure 6.1), which are summarised briefly in the proceeding section.

6.2.1 Ethical Considerations of Research

Research dealing with humans must adhere to set out standards of research in order not to violate ethical values. When this has been done, research results are often deemed authentic and reliable (Resnik, 2015). In conforming to academic scholarship, clearance from the office of the Directorate for Research (see Appendix A) and a letter of permission from the Manager of Department of Arts and Culture (see Appendix B) who is the custodian for public libraries were granted. Key informants and adults who participated in the study gave either a verbal or written consent (see Appendix C). Consent for youth respondents who participated in the qualitative study was given by the school principal, who also assisted in organising them into a focus group. As this research also involved children, it was imperative that their parents/guardians be consulted before the children could be engaged. This was done for the focus group of children which was held in the library building and the parents/guardians gave written consent. For the groups of children that were engaged in the drop-in centres for both the qualitative and quantitative studies, verbal permission was given by the managers of the centres. This confirmed to the participants that the study was legitimate and approve; that they were protected by the confidentiality clause and participation was voluntary.

6.2.2 Community Entry

Prior to data collection, certain activities were carried out in order to facilitate recruitment of participants, securing permission to conduct the study and also to conscientise the community about the intended study. The initial contact was with the librarian through a telephonic conversation to introduce myself and the intended study. It was through this conversation that an appointment was made to go and talk to the manager community services who was then in charge of the library before incorporation into Thulamela. During this meeting with the manager it was opportune on my side to assess the situation of the library as well.

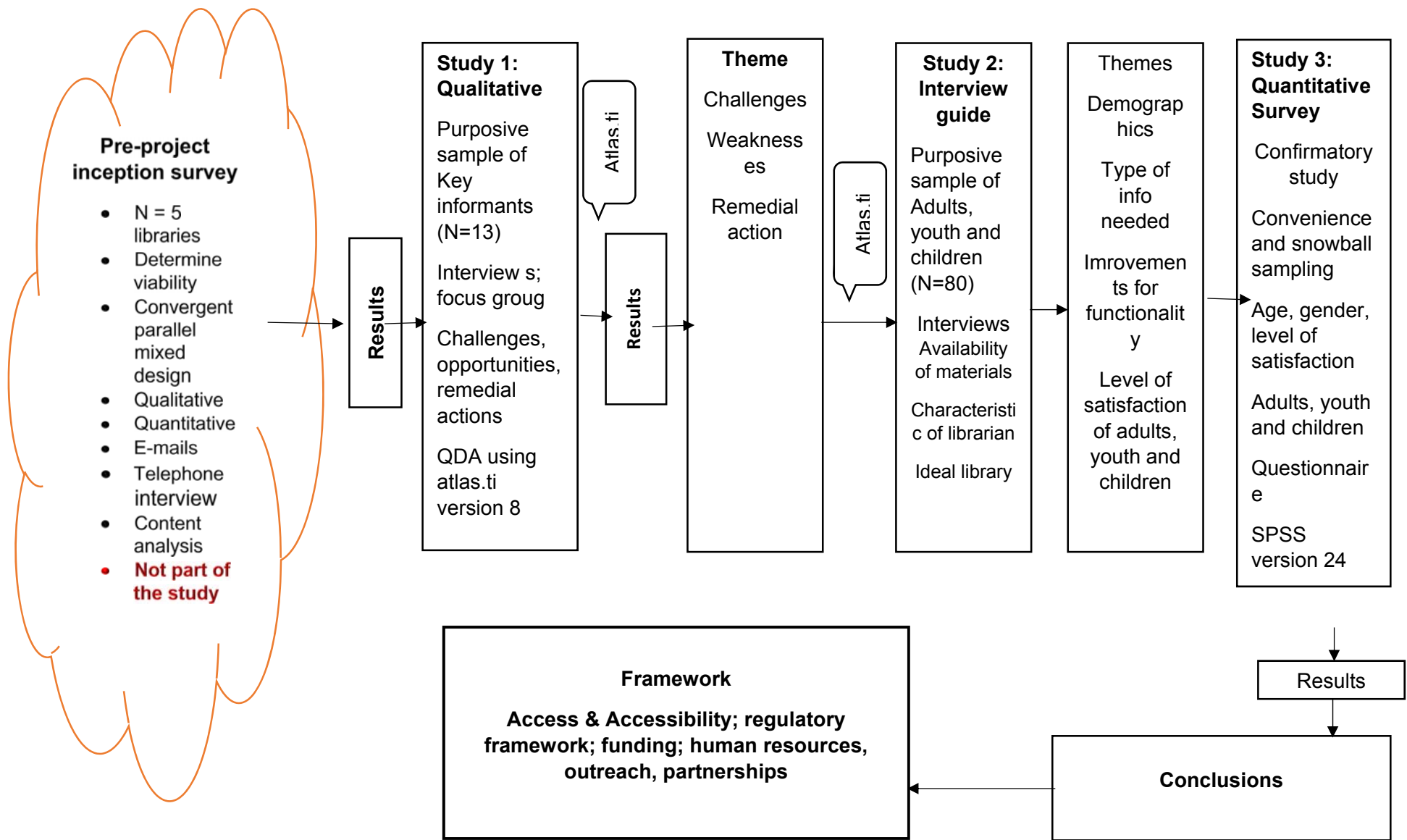


Figure 6.1: Sequential exploratory mixed method research followed in this study

The strategy used to gain entry into the community was to use a research assistant who was a local and knew the way around the community. The assistant was indispensable as she knew who the contact people were in most of the sites visited. This eliminated the need to search first for who the gatekeepers were in various instances. She was also conversant with the protocols to be followed. It was then appropriate after securing permission from DAC to first approach the chief in the vicinity so that the community was aware that such research was being carried out. He then gave permission for *khoro* to be interviewed during their scheduled meeting which was just a week away from the day of first contact. With all the other CBO's the managers gave permission for either the staff to participate or the learners, in the case of the drop-in centres consulted.

6.3 Overview of the Empirical Studies Conducted

In the first study (Chapter 4), purposive sampling was used to select fourteen (14) key informants who were engaged in individual face-to-face interviews and a focus group. The reason for having this purposive sample was to ensure that only the respondents with relevant information pertaining to the research questions would be engaged (Creswell *et al*, 2011; Gubrium, 2018). In consideration of protocol, the manager communication services was interviewed first, as he was considered the central person to offer rich information on the questions to be asked. The analysed results from this study provided themes that informed the formulation of a semi-structured interview guide (Appendix E) for the focus groups and individual interviews in the second qualitative study. For the second qualitative study (chapter 5) respondents were both age and gender sensitive. This was done in order to get perspectives of the different age groups as well as those based on gender. The two forms of data sets (key informants and community respondents) were linked in the overall analysis.

The third study was a confirmatory survey. Convenience and snowball techniques were used to sample the 172 respondents who were engaged. Adults, youth and children responded to a Likert type questionnaire(with nine (9) broad themes to garner the level of satisfaction with library services and resources. The criteria used for selection was based on availability of the respondents on the days and times the researcher or her assistant was on site(s). Chi-square test was used to calculate significant differences in the perceptions of the community on the local

library between male and female residents and between different age groups (adults, youths and children). Cramer's V was used to measure the strength of the relationship. In all three studies all the participants gave consent to be part of the studies and were engaged on a voluntary basis. Illustrative quotations that were used in the results sections did not feature real names to protect the anonymity of all respondents.

Data analysis for all three studies were managed through computer software. Computer Assisted Data Analysis Software packages have evolved and grown in functionality to support the research process (Ang *et al.*, 2016; Creswell, 2017). Use of Atlas.ti brought rigour and trustworthiness into qualitative inquiry although it was not without its fair share of challenges (Check out the anecdotal account of some of the experiences in the box in the proceeding pages) This is due to the fact that Atlas.ti version 8 was used for the qualitative studies and SPSS version 24 for the quantitative data. Use of these two software ensured that data were manageable and accounted for completely. Atlas.ti deals with transferability given that similar studies can be replicated with ease from the available quotations, networks and tables generated and used to present the results. The research objectives and related questions for the whole study are presented in Table 6.1.

6.3.1 Triangulation of techniques, sources and methods

Triangulation of data sources and techniques were used in the current study to get in-depth perceptions of the community regarding library services. By using focus group discussions, interviews and a survey using both males and females further stratified by age (adults, youth and children), this made for a rich data source and increased the reliability and validity of the findings. The triangulated data sources were assessed against one another to cross check and interpret the data (Ang, 2016). Atlas.ti was used to corroborate data collected from interviews and focus groups by identifying major and minor categories of themes. As Creswell *et al.*, (2011) states, common themes are a feature of data collected from interviews and focus groups. By using different methods to collect data, different perceptions were gathered and these could be compared across the methods and also across the data sources with ease using features in tlas.ti. The advantage of using Atlas.ti is that every single document, interview or voice recording can be stored in one file (called a hermeneutic unit – HU) for a particular study as a primary document. It is therefore convenient to compare documents, codes and themes all in one platform.

Table 6.2 Research objectives and related questions for the study on developing a framework for enhanced functionality of public libraries for rural community development

Research Objective	Research questions
1) To identify the challenges public libraries face in rendering services to children, youth and adults	i) What are the challenges you face in rendering services to users?
	ii) What do you consider the strengths of the library?
	iii) Do the users find what they look for in the library?
	iv) What must be done to alleviate these challenges??
2) To determine whether the type of information rural dwellers need for personal use and community development varies according to age	i) What are the characteristics of an ideal public library that will be useful to you?
	ii) Are your needs being met?
	iii) What type of information do you need in order to make decisions that will change your life?
	iv) Is the information mentioned above readily available through your local library?
	v) What are the characteristics that a librarian should possess?
	vi) What can be done in order to have a library that adequately meet users' needs?
vii) To determine the level of satisfaction of adults, youth and children with library services	i) Does the level of satisfaction of adults, youth and children with services of the local library differ according to age?
	ii) Do the challenges adults, youth and children face in using the local public library differ according to age?
	iii) Does the type of information adults, youth and children need for personal use and community development differ according to age?

Any issue picked up during an interview could for instance, be further explored during focus group discussions. A case in point is that of a concern raised during an interview with a library user, where she pointed out that the time allocated for internet use was one hour irrespective of whether another user was waiting for their turn or not. This was further explored with a focus group of mixed adults, who also felt that there should not be any limits if no one wanted to use the internet

Stratification of age was a crucial dimension in this study. Failure to recognise age and gender imperatives was identified to be impacting negatively on functional information provision (Emmel, 2015; Pateman & Vincent, 2016), apart from race, sexuality and disability. This is because when specific and crucial variables such as age are not factored in when determination and provision of information for users is made, irrelevance and inadequacy of information resources prevail.

6.3.2 Integration of data from various methods and sources

Data from key informants interviewed during phase one of the study were organised using atlas.ti to analyse using themes. From these themes, an interview guide for phase two of the study was constructed. Interactive coding and categorisation of data was done for interviews and focus group discussions. Constant comparison of the data was done in order to analyse the responses from individual interviews and focus groups. In order to ensure transferability of the findings (De Vos, 2002; Neuman, 2007; Sandelowski, 2012) a combination of key informants (made up of government officials, cleaning staff as well as security staff) and groups of adults, youth and children coming from different villages around the library were recruited. This broad pool of respondents ensured a variation in perceptions. The use of multiple methods to collect data offered different ways to preserve reality (Creswell, 2003; Flick 2014) while also highlighting similar issues that were generated by individual methods. This was the strength of this study. The opportunity missed to incorporate a community some 25 kilometers away from the library was deeply regretted, as documented in anecdote number 2 in the proceeding page.

Anecdote One

HAVE PATIENCE, WILL SUCCEED: snippets from a diary of a research journey

Background

Every PhD journey has its own unique challenges for the candidate. I'm not talking just one incident here, but rather all the challenges that are encountered at each stage of the research journey. This is my own account of perseverance, as one will find out that a lot of that is necessary if one wants to finish in the end.

Stage One: Proposal

Right at the point of proposal submission, that is exactly two days before due date, I discovered that the reference manager I was using had not been renewed so I could not extract my bibliography. As luck would have it I had only directly exported my references and did not have a soft copy of my references as backup. I mean who does manual referencing in this day and age, right? Well, I wished then I had a manual backup or at least had used the free for use reference managers available then.

On the day I presented my proposal, three things did not go well for me. Firstly I was the 1st one up since I was travelling to see a very sick relative on the same day. With all the tensions that go with the presentation, I took a new medication on that day and went on to have my morning cup of "Cyrils" just before the presentation. So right in the middle of the presentation my mouth went so dry I could not talk properly. It all felt like I had this drying glue in my mouth. I asked for water and none was provided for at the stage. So I had to go on. It was like a tug of war - dry mouth, frustration and everybody was looking at me!!! So in the end as I was about to sit down, that golden oasis – water suddenly appears in all those nice plastic bottles!! You can imagine the feeling!

Stage two: Data Collection

This one time I travelled to the remotest area yet visited during this research: maybe the name of the area will give an idea how remote the place was - Tshokotshoko!! So, I made arrangements to have a focus group discussion with the *khoro* the following Saturday. On the day of the engagement, I woke up and the weather was extremely overcast. Being a visually challenged person, I never drive in the rain or at night if I can help it. I decided that because this was going to be my largest group of respondents and residing furthest from the library (some 25 km on a rocky road), I should go none the less. I picked up my research assistant on the way and we drove down there. Half way through the journey the road, it became so overcast that I couldn't see any further. Thus, rather than risking our lives (this road is also full of livestock crossing all the time) we decided to turn back and phoned to inform our contact persons that we would not make it because of dangerous weather conditions.

Many challenges lay in ambush along the way, I cannot possibly document everything here. Be that as it may, there were pockets of happiness in the journey. My favourite memories are of the children. Oh those lovely and innocent souls. I always visualize them scrambling to carry my research bag to the car for me. Bless their souls.

Data Analysis

Now I will be quick to say I am VERY proud that I taught myself how to analyse data using atlas.ti. (With all the help from Youtube videos of course) my license did not come with a promised video and I did not bother to follow it up. Now the way that I taught myself was I would look at a video, try to follow the steps, and sometimes those nice diagrams and reports did not come up the way they did on the videos. So, solution? I learnt that the adage "garbage in, garbage out" is true after all. Not that I was putting in garbage, rather circumspection was the order of the day. I forgot to import one focus group transcription and the data was not making sense as I can say I was "intimate" with my data, until I identified the group that was missing when I was creating one of the networks for this research. Learning this software is the one skill I'm taking as a learning experience worth the effort and frustrations during my journey and it is a permanent skill I plan to keep and build on. It made data analysis so much quicker, fun and reliable.

Some lessons Learnt: Always **ALWAYS** have back up for everything!! Never take new medicine on the day you are scheduled to present anything. You don't know the side effects!! Never drink coffee just before a presentation, you know it has a drying effect, **LOLEST.**



Source: Google images

6.3.3 Data Saturation

In this study, data saturation was achieved in two ways, namely through thematic data saturation (when no new emerging ideas were coming forth) and visualizations (Hancock et al., 2010). After doing eleven interviews with government officials, library users and a businessman, it was clear that nothing new was being recorded. So rather than waste the respondents time by soliciting information that was not going to add another dimension to the research (Francis, 2010; Nelson, 2017), the decision was to engage adults, youth and children in focus groups of mixed gender and also in those with male and females. Responses from these groups were recorded, coded and imported into Atlas.ti 8. Visualisation of data were done to interrogate the data for similarities or differences in perceptions including using word clouds, which were also created to see which concepts were dominating. Visualisations are the networks represented in figures which clearly show the similarities and differences in responses. These can easily be interrogated against each other and across the different data sources. These networks were included in the write up to enhance rather than just populate the report (Hancock *et al.*, 2016). By analysing the identified themes provided by the groups' responses, collective responses could be recorded, corroborated by the groups, thereby confirming data saturation (Hancock *et al.*, 2016).

6.4 Limitations of the Study

The study was focused on the rural community of Mutale. This limits the applicability of the recommendations to other rural community libraries. The study did not look into the information seeking behaviour of the library users. This dimension also needs to be looked into in the future to see where and how the community is accessing information elsewhere, if at all. The study also did not incorporate library records such as library membership and circulation statistics. The study also surveyed perceptions of adults, youth and children residing nearer to the library. It would have been interesting to see if dwellers who reside further from the library would have had different perceptions. It is recommended that similar location-specific studies be carried out in other rural communities taking into cognisance the limitations mentioned here. Below is another account of the journey which could have added another dimension to the study. The ranking exercise using a rapid rural appraisal technique of budgeting had to be abandoned because of reasons explained in the proceeding box.

Anecdote two

The sold-out show that never kicked off!!!

Now many a would-be-researcher knows that proper planning and the anticipation to pilot that one technique that would make for innovation in one's research is not a guarantee that the respondents are going to show up on the day of the engagement. Sooooo, on this occasion I arranged for ONE HUNDRED AND TWELVE (Yes you heard right, 112!) respondents to take part in an innovative Rapid Rural Appraisal technique of budgeting, meant to rank the items in a questionnaire developed from a qualitative study. I arrived at the research site with my assistant, looking all academic with my wheelie research bag. At the corner of the yard the "respondents" were already seated and yes they were MANY and I was all smiles. I could already see the groups all doled up and ranking their responses using the monetary coins that I had brought with me.

As normal protocol and etiquette would dictate, I greeted them and went to announce my arrival at the office of the manager of the centre. And then came the bombshell!!! Those people outside were actually very ANGRY. They had just been told that their contracts were not going to be renewed and were actually not waiting for me at all. Rather, they were waiting for an official who was supposed to tell them when they were going to be paid their last wages. True to the word, I looked outside and was just in time to see the last of the ladies going out of the yard. I cannot even tell you how I felt at the time but had to keep a straight face.

The ranking exercise was still carried out. However, and it is a "Beeg" HOWEVER!! In the group that participated (now this group was made up of professionals in the centre) there was this one lady who wanted to make sure that the exercise did not happen. She kept on complaining and criticising the whole process until I put it to her to imagine what it would feel like when it was her turn to do her master's degree and her respondents were dishing out that kind of behaviour or even worse. So I put her "in charge" as the leader of the exercise and it went "wellish" for a while until they finished one theme and they had to go to the next. Everyone just shouted NO WAY!! They stood up and wanted to leave because you see, they still had to rank 8 more themes for a total of X questions. That one theme took them 2 ½ hours to agree on the scores as they kept on over-budgeting on some of the preferences. Seeing as I was going to have to do this with more groups after losing the group that abandoned me, it was decided together with my PhD promoter that the technique was sadly not going to work for this particular research. And that was that ... no innovative assessment for this research. Viva SPSS Viva!!

Fortunately the respondents consented to being photographed during the exercise and also for me to use any of the photos taken if I see fit. As you can see below, it was an "interesting" activity.



Figure 6.2 Ranking exercise that was abandoned using budgeting technique

6.5. Major Findings

6.5.1 Challenges of public libraries

The first objective for this study was to determine the challenges that the library faces in offering services to adults, youth and children (chapter 4). Many challenges that hamper smooth provision of library services were identified. The most common views that emerged from library staff and government officials were that running of rural public libraries needs to be decentralized to local municipalities and capacitated with the necessary funding, opening hours needed to be adjusted, Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) also needed to be improved and increased as well as additions to the collection of books and other physical resources. Cleaners and security staff indicated infrastructural problems and continuity of service as challenges. The expectation to fill in for the librarian after hours added a dimension of job stress. Security staff indicated users expected them to allow them to use the library after hours, as they work even during the night. This was not what the security had signed for, so they felt that it was not going to happen. Although access to internet and the business management collection were identified as strengths by one librarian and another government official, these were deemed insufficient by adult, youth and children respondents in the second qualitative study.

The implications for rural development are that when everything is done at a local level, there are less restrictions hampering service provision. Turnaround time for acquisitions of books, ICT support and general allocation of funds to different aspects related to the smooth running of the library are reduced, thereby increasing the chances of offering high-quality services that are responsive to the needs of the local community. The study contributes drivers to smooth running of libraries with less restrictions and red-tape. These drivers (adequate funding, appropriate policies which cater to local needs, spot-on ICT support, maintenance of the library and legislation that is responsive to the needs of the local community), can ensure that all allocated monies per year are spent, more staff are employed and correct resources are acquired from suppliers who know about the LIS environment, rather than living the acquisitions of library materials to supply-chain officials who have no clue how the industry works.

6.5.2 Information needs of the local community

The second objective was to determine if the type of information needed for individual and community use varied according to age (chapter 5). Shortage of books in the different activities (school, general knowledge, tertiary, health etc.) was identified by all the groups, with children only identifying books related to their school subjects. Also limited accessibility to resources due to insufficient opening hours and limited number of computers to access the internet were also featuring across the age groups. Adult groups alluded to lack of consultation with the community as the major contributory factor for the library being less known, utilized and less appreciated for the potential value that it could add to the lives of the community. Lack of any marketing activities was also noted as a limiting factor to usage of the library by the community.

The implications of the issues raised above with respect to rural development are that adequate funding needs to be made available to local libraries. This will enable libraries to provide relevant, current and adequate resources to cater for the diverse needs of the community. Adequate funding could be used to add more computers, which can be used to access even more current information online. Also for future endeavours and as a way forward, the government needs to engage the community in the planning stages of any projects that affect them. The community must also be informed as projects progress. It is also imperative to solicit input from the community as to how libraries for instance should be resourced and how continuity of service could be assured and ensured in a manner that adequately caters for the majority of the rural dwellers.

This study contributes to the pillars that can enhance the functionality of public libraries in rural areas. These pillars include an enabling library environment with a clear mandate for funding, enough and suitably qualified human resources, enough information resources which are current, relevant and easily accessible, suitable amenities and adequate infrastructure including ICTs provision and support and the involvement of stakeholders in the processes of library service. The study also contributes to the SDGs by trying to provide an enabling environment from which the community can access information to develop as individuals and also as a group (Igbinovia, 2017).

6.5.3 Community satisfaction with library service provision

In the third study the level of satisfaction of adults, youth and children with library services and resources was assessed through a survey utilizing a questionnaire. Demographic characteristics of the respondents included age, gender, economic activity, marital status, educational qualification, user/non user of library, frequency of library use, duration of library use and distance travelled to access the library. The level of satisfaction was assessed on: information needed for personal use and community development, availability of materials in the library, type of information needed to make informed decisions, improvements that can enhance functionality of the local library and views of current resources and services available in the library. Chi-square results showed no significant differences in the perceptions of males and females; adults, youth and children with regards to services of the local public library. Cramers' V test showed mostly no relationship to weak (0.00 to 0.30) for the perceptions of males and females; adult, youth and children. In the following sections, the tests are summarized.

Availability of services

A Chi-square test indicated significant association between gender and availability of telephone services, and this association/relationship was deemed to be weak according to Cramer's V test (0.3)

Available amenities

More youths and adults seemed to agree on the importance of ample parking space compared to children, even though a Cramer's V value of 0.2 showed a weak relationship between age and the perception on the availability of ample parking space.

Availability of materials in the library

Significant differences due to age were observed on "Current books on all subjects", "Major reference works such as Encyclopedias and dictionaries", "Books on arts and crafts", "Audio-visual materials" and "Electronic databases". No significant differences due to gender were observed on all aspects on availability of materials except for "Children's materials".

Type of information needed to make informed decisions

A Chi-square test showed a significant association between age and perception on the type of information needed to make informed “educational” decisions. More males perceived health related information as important to making decisions compared to females. In both cases Cramer’s V test showed a weak relationship/association as demonstrated by Cramer’s V values less than 0.3.

Level of satisfaction with available amenities

With the exception of “Comfortability of chairs” and “Cleanliness of building”, the respondents’ level of satisfaction with available amenities showed association by gender. Higher proportions of female respondents expressed higher levels of satisfaction compared to males, with a significantly high proportion ($P < 0.001$) of females expressing more satisfaction on “Reliability of supply of running water in ablution facilities.” This was also deemed weak as demonstrated by Cramer’s V values less than 0.3.

These results show that rural dwellers have diverse information needs speaking specifically to their own economic activity and are not satisfied with current resources available in the library. Internet connectivity is also central to keeping the community informed. This calls for urgent action from the government to make sure that there is adequate funding for resourcing the library with information for all age groups and also general information that can be useful to everybody. Another interesting observation that was made was that information needs are not gendered; both males and females needed information equally. Thus, it is the duty of the library to make sure that services and resources are marketed targeting all genders so that usage can be maximised.

The above results show that in the hypotheses of this study, only a few significant differences were observed. Their degree of association was deemed weak by Cramer’s V test. These hypotheses were, therefore, rejected.

6.6 Conclusions

In this study, a sequentially integrated mixed method approach was used to get the perceptions of key informants and library and non-library users with regards to local library services. The

study was anchored on the ecological framework by Asselen & Doiron. The main aim of this study was to develop a model for enhanced functionality of public libraries that can assist in ensuring that rural communities develop themselves through information available in them. The objectives of this study which were stated in chapter 1 (section 1.3) were: to identify the challenges public libraries face in rendering services to adults, youth and children; to determine whether the type of information rural dwellers need for personal use and community development varies according to age and to assess the level of satisfaction of children, youth and adults with the services of the local public library.

In the study several challenges were identified that proved beneficial in finding out what hinders smooth provision of expected services by the library. It provided an opportunity to obtain and understand challenges of government officials, librarians and support staff who were holistically key informants in the study. The study revealed the extent to which these challenges hampered service provision on a daily basis. The issue of funding was shown to impact on a number of areas of critical service provision such as collection development, library opening hours, hiring of librarians on a permanent basis, insufficient and obsolete resources as well as lack of IT support showed that many challenges hinder the key informants in the day-to-day operations of the library. It is imperative that these challenges be taken seriously and solved expediently in order to curtail further disadvantaging the intended users. All the concerns raised in this study need to be brought to the attention of the relevant library authorities who are custodians of libraries. The key informants made suggestions themselves on what changes should take place and what interventions should be effected. This might influence the change of some of the restrictive policies which are putting constraints to smooth library operation.

Emerging issues in the second study to determine whether information needs of the community differ according to age were also beneficial in showing the type of information needed by the community. All age groups indicated a need for the collection to be beefed, with each group indicating gaps in the collections available in the library. The study showed that all needed information with many alluding to the need for more information covering different subjects. Access to internet was also identified as important. The community felt that should information not be available in hard copies it could be supplemented or augmented by online information. The challenge, however, is that there are few computers to service the whole community. Coupled with this is the challenge of IT support which was shown to be lacking and impacting on

the way in which services were being provided. The study also revealed that it is important for the person employed as the librarian to be knowledgeable and welcoming. This will ensure that the users' needs are well taken of and users are not afraid to approach the person for assistance should there be a need to do so. A lot of recommendations from the respondents were given, which if implemented, could ensure that information needs of the community are taken care of and the library it is used by many people. Therefore, better funding structure, well-trained librarians, better IT support, better maintenance of the library were recommended in this study.

In the third study which was a user satisfaction survey it was revealed that the majority of the community does not use the library regularly and that more females than males make use of the library. This might be the result of not marketing the library sufficiently in order for it to be known widely by both males and females. The study also showed that the level of satisfaction with library services was neither gendered nor age-specific as most respondents who participated in the study indicated that they were not satisfied. Where some associated was indicated the strength of the relationship was deemed weak by Crammer's V values $<.3$. The surveyed respondents also showed that Services offered in the library should also target specific groups who have need for those particular services. It was recommended that the library engages the community in periodic assessment of satisfaction with library services in order to identify and align any unfulfilled and evolving needs to services provided in the library. The study culminated in suggesting a model that can be used in future to enhance functioning of public libraries. Recommendations for policy, the library and for the profession were also offered

6.7 Recommendations

The recommendations made in the current study constitute the pillars for enhancing functionality of public libraries in rural areas. A summary is presented in Table 7.2

6.7.1 Recommendations for policy

Since their inception, libraries in South Africa have been beset with the challenge of inadequate funding. The confusion between provinces and municipalities about the oversight and funding of library services continues to undermine provision of high quality services to communities with unequal access to information (Witbooi, 2007; Strand, 2016). The KPMG Services and Jacaranda Intellectual Property report recommended a R1 billion allocation to public libraries. This funding was allocated for the development of library infrastructure, material and services. Even so, it must

still be the responsibility of government to prioritise libraries by making adequate funding available to service particularly rural public libraries in South Africa, which till today, are still under-resourced. Taking this into account, the following policy recommendations are worth considering:

- a) Review the policy on funding of public libraries such that it becomes clearer and more specific who funds local public libraries and in what way;
- b) Review policy on opening hours in order to give leeway to accommodate most users unable to use the library during the currently designated times;
- c) The possibility of formalising use of volunteers in public libraries as a strategy for extending opening hours. Linked to this is the possibility of inducting librarians who might have just completed their training and remain unemployed. They can be placed in a library where an experienced librarian would mentor them for an agreed period of strategic placement. By so doing, they become better orientated about the practical environment of serving a rural community;
- d) The possibility of employing ICT Technicians to serve a few dedicated libraries within a manageable radius should be explored because it would reduce the time libraries wait before technical problems are attended to;
- e) Librarians should be appointed on a permanent basis to ensure continuity and quality of rendering services as well as job satisfaction.

6.7.2 Recommendations for the library

From the results, it was apparent that there are certain interventions that the library needs to effect to make the library more usable, accessible and functional at all times. Some of the interventions needed the library to partner with other agencies involved in community development which together with the library can help the community to access the library and its resources with ease. The following interventions are thereby recommended for the library.

a) Marketing the library to increase awareness of resources on offer

The Community was unaware of what the local library offered. Some people did not even know that there was a library in the area. This justified marketing activities targeting various segments of society. The “khoros”, which was vocal about marketing of the library during their focus group discussion presented a huge opportunity for engaging the local community in making the library known. The marketing activities should extend to schools where learners would be made aware of the resources that can complement what was already at their disposal. Apart from schools, large numbers of people can be reached through churches and establishing a website for the

library (Inanloo, 2018). Velasquez (2018) indicates that using websites as a form of marketing is important and strategic in the digital world. Public library websites provide information that includes library holdings, subscribed databases, library events, information on staff as well as embedded information about important information available elsewhere.

At the beginning of the study, it was difficult to know who to contact at the Mutale library. This was mainly due to the fact that the library was not included in the provincial database. If the library had a website, this problem could have been offset. Another option worth pursuing is opening a *Facebook* page. Bhatt and Raj (2016) and Harrison, 2017 lend support to this option of using social media tools such as Facebook, WhatsApp, twitter and blogs to market library services. They assert that these tools can fulfil users 'information needs timeously as they are mostly already active in those platforms. This would make it easier for the librarian to interact with users and remain abreast with their aspirations and expectations.

b) Partnerships with other bodies involved in community development

Establishing strong working relationships with other agencies involved in community development such as schools, business, churches, CBOs, drop-in centres, FETs and the university within reach of the library might be mutually beneficial. Through such relationships, the library is likely to become a true hub of community life through facilitating and hosting meetings and related events that champion development work. Also, the library can enhance access to relevant information needed to improve performance of projects. By so doing, the library is likely to attract more support from the government, philanthropic organisations, business and the donor community.

c) Library training and hosting of workshops

An obvious gap in the operations of the library was that it was not offering any training to library users, in particular with respect to how to use computers to search for information. Library training increases the usage of library resources as users know what is available and how to use or access it (Mamafha & Ngulube, 2014; Bopape et al, 2017). In instances where suggested training does not fall under the expertise of librarians, the library can enlist the help of specialists in those fields. In such instances, the library can host workshops, which create awareness about the role of the library in community life and development. Training can be identified by the number of request

for a particular service or a suggestion box can be used for users to recommend the kind of training they would like to have. Community members would familiarize themselves with the available services and resources while also acquiring critical skills needed to develop themselves.

d) Periodic user satisfaction surveys to cater for evolving needs

Technological advancements are creating dynamic environments that compel libraries to adopt innovative strategies for them to remain relevant. This implies that the libraries should keep abreast with user information needs and how to provide for them satisfactorily. Periodic user satisfaction surveys are the backbone of successful service provision in libraries (Akanwa et al, 2018, Mairaj, 2013; Tan et al., 2017) Moreover, they empower libraries with information they need to lobby for more funding. The same information is also crucial for internal planning in the library. For example, the user surveys help make informed decisions regarding how resources can be allocated.

6.7.3 Recommendations for Further Research

a) A comparative study of all public libraries in the Vhembe area

There are several widely dispersed libraries in Vhembe District and beyond. They have been operating for varied numbers of years. Given that the Mutale library is relatively young, to what extent do the issues identified and recommendations for improved functionality differ from those for the older ones?

b) Volunteers and continuity of service in rural public libraries

There is need to test the feasibility of using volunteers to extend the opening hours of offering library services, including Saturdays. This will partly take care of the challenge of opening hours after hours and on Saturdays, while the library tries to come up with a permanent solution. The ideal situation would be for policy to allow for the extension of library hours beyond 16h00 and on Saturdays. This way all categories of users would be catered for and be able to fit into time slots they would be free.

c) “Mzansi Libraries Online” and its effect on development

Narrowing the digital divide in rural communities is critical and urgent to achieve. It can close gaps and improve access to digital information in particular. The advent of the “Mzansi Libraries online” project makes it imperative to establish its effect in order to ensure that the expended resources are relevant, in point and value-adding to the target recipients. “Mzansi Libraries online” is a project funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation and run by the Department of Arts and Culture. It aims to equip public libraries particularly those in rural areas with IT equipment such as computers, tables, printers, scanners and gaming gadgets (NLSA, online). Its impact on people’s lives has been seen in how the technology has been used in recipient libraries. For instance, in Limpopo, Thulamela Main Library has already received 20 computers, 10 tablets, 1 printer and a scanner. Through these equipment, users are able to search and apply for jobs online, register their companies online, form networks with others with similar interests, and get health information online (NLSA, online). Mutale Library was not included in the pilot phase of this project. It has been a year since the library was included in the second batch of the piloting libraries. It is necessary to assess if the project has been successful. Such a study should try to establish what the ICTs are being used for, benefits derived by the library users, how it has helped them develop themselves and also establish what the ICTs are being used for. Given that the study established problems associated with ICT support, the study should also try to establish whether there have been positive changes in that regard. Such information could be useful in securing more ICTs to beef up the present provisions if necessary, so that more people can benefit from this project.

Table 6.3 Proposed model for enhanced functionality of public libraries as hubs of information for community development

Challenge/Present Situation	Proposed Intervention
<p>Operation and Management of libraries (Presently managed from district)</p>	<p>Legislative/executive assignment of library functions to local Municipalities;</p> <p>Recognition of strategic role of public libraries by national and local government;</p> <p>Build libraries' capacity for improvement through skilled workforce</p>
<p>Funding</p> <p>Provincial "Conditional grants" – managed from Provinces</p>	<p>Pronouncement on responsibility for funding of libraries</p> <p>Allow for local libraries to seek donations in cash and in kind (books and other information materials) from local entrepreneurs and other funding bodies</p> <p>Alternative sources of funding e.g. donations</p> <p>"conditional grants" paid directly to Municipalities as ring fenced funding</p>
<p>Human Resources</p> <p>1 librarian, 1 library assistant, 1 general worker</p> <p>Contract appointments</p> <p>Provincial ICT technician</p> <p>Salaries paid from grants</p>	<p>Adequate and suitably trained staff (Library qualification)</p> <p>Mentorships of newly qualified librarians; parity of salaries with other provinces, volunteers</p> <p>Permanent appointments</p> <p>Dedicated ICT technician – short defined radius, dedicated permanent cleaner(s), training of librarians on ICT skills for minor troubleshooting</p> <p>Salaries paid by or through Municipalities</p>
<p>ICTs</p>	<p>Scanners, photocopiers, computers for word processing, dedicated computers for internet connection or use, gaming equipment</p>

Challenge/Present Situation	Proposed Intervention
Access and accessibility	
<p>Opening hours, 40 hours/week</p> <p>Materials for older persons, disabled persons, Adult, Basic Education and Training (ABET), Information resources for all interest groups</p>	<p>Extended hours, including Saturdays.</p> <p>Maximised specing of allocated funds through customer-driven acquisitions and local librarian selections,</p> <p>Information resources for all interest groups,</p> <p>Digital citizenship – digital capacity training for users to access information independently</p> <p>Use ICTs effectively to provide needed services</p> <p>Contribute to the achievement of SDGs through provision of functional ICTs to connect local community to much needed information in various fields</p>
Outreach	Continuous stakeholder consultation or engagement
Stakeholder consultation	
Communication	<p>Outreach, marketing, public library awareness campaigns, radio interviews to promote the library</p> <p>Services tailored to be inclusive and assist in building a cohesive community</p>
Partnerships	
<p>Infrastructure</p> <p>Suitable amenities</p>	<p>Dedicated spaces for business, health, quiet study functional ablution facilities,</p> <p>availability of potable water,</p> <p>Continuous improvement of public library buildings to ensure provision of good community spaces</p>
Users'surveys	<p>Periodically assess needs of adults, youth and children, level of satisfaction and knowledge about library service provisions</p>

The above model shows either the challenge or the present provision in the LIS charter on the first column, which represent the aspect that can be modified or filled if not already provided for. To make the model more visually appealing and show how the different suggested recommendations can contribute to the functionality of public libraries, a diagram was composed using atlas.ti version 8. It involved amplifying the voices of the respondents and also incorporating best practice as already alluded to by other researchers as recommendations for the model. The functionality aspects (Management and operation of libraries, funding, human resources, ICTs, outreach, partnerships, infrastructure and user surveys discussed in Chapter 6 sections 6.6.1-6.6.2 are visually presented in Figure 6.2 as the proposed functionality model. Further studies could add other pointers to the boxes as deemed fit based on challenges and needs of communities surveyed.

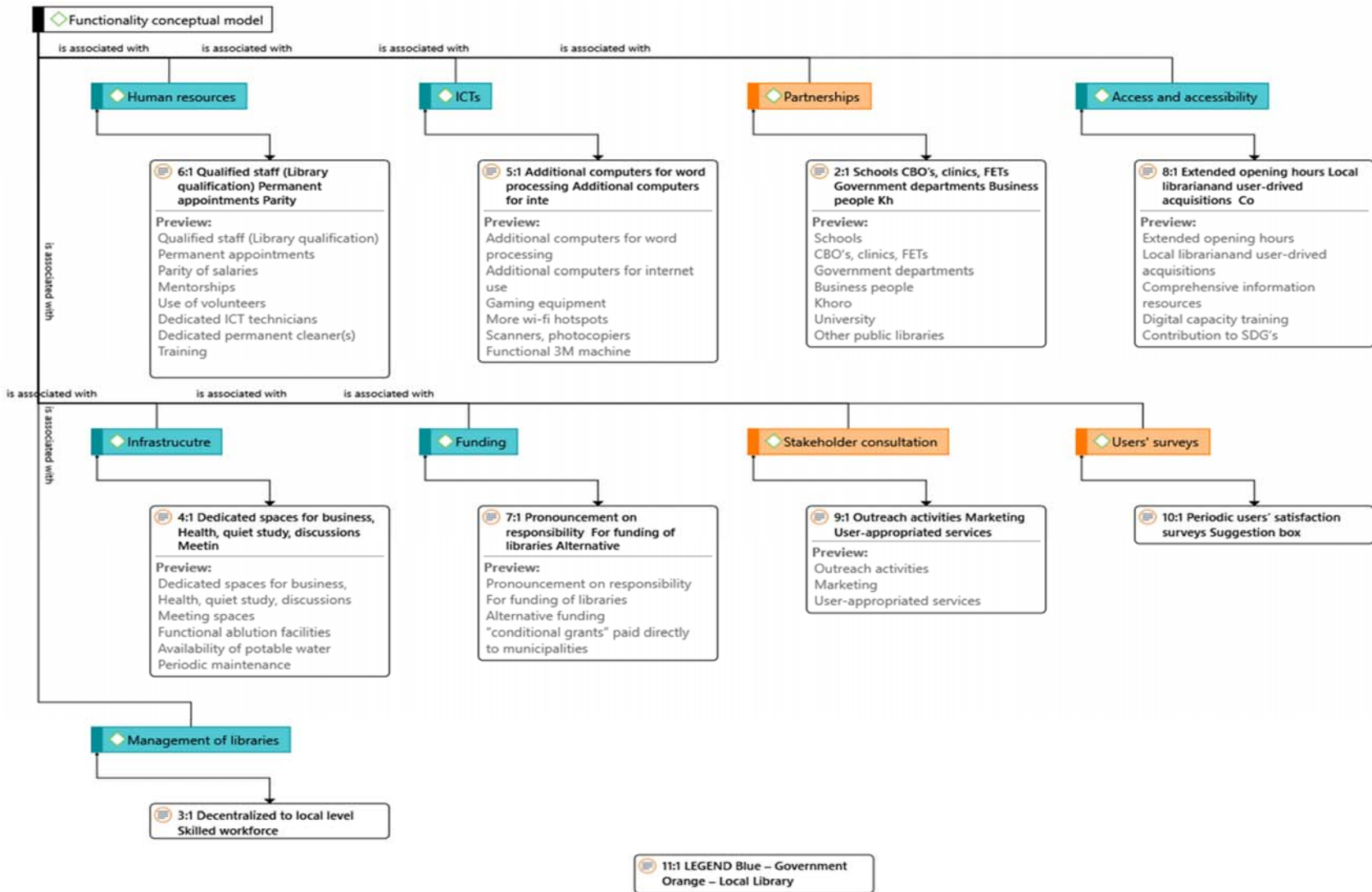


Figure 6.3 Functionality model proposed for the study

6.8 Contribution to the Scholarship of Librarianship

The study contributes immensely to the body of knowledge. It draws attention to place-based library service provision disparities. The study emphasizes the potential impact rural community libraries can have on development through the explicit mandate to develop communities around which they are located. The originality of this study lies in the three separate but interrelated surveys involving key informants (government officials, librarians and support staff), adults, youth and children. The narrative on the methodology sections confirms that fresh data was generated for this study. Both male and female respondents were included in the study in order to determine whether there were any differences in their perception of issues. The key informants were deemed relevant because of the belief that they had first-hand information on what hampered provision of library services. Engaging different people drawn from a diverse range of age groups and gender (adults, youth, children, males and females) demonstrated evidence of triangulation of data collection techniques and saturation crucial to qualitative research which imparted a crucial dimension to the study.

The present system of “one size fits all” to library resources provision by the government undermines the potential for the community to take part in tailor-making of programmes that could satisfy their information needs. Specifically, gender and age aspects should receive priority when planning for library services. Therefore, soliciting views of diverse user preferences during the survey was important because it was premised on the need to enhance targeting of interventions in the event that there were notable differences worth considering. There is no available literature drawn following this approach. Other studies have focused on library services for youth (Hart & Nassimbeni, 2013), poverty and social exclusion (Stilwell, 2011; Mnkeni-Saurombe & Zimu, 2013) and others on library users’ information needs (Bopape *et al.*, 2017)

The study contributed much to scholarship in LIS. Table 6.4 shows how scholarship can be interpreted and applied in the field of librarianship. The contributions made by this study are numerous and include: a modified model of public libraries developed through participatory engagement of a wide range of interest groups, namely adults, youth and children, with an added voice of Key informants who were mainly professionals in the field; the methodology used (sequential, exploratory and integrated) to conduct the study has the potential for application in different settings; the generated information on functionality of libraries is crucial to the body of

knowledge and the study is important to government since it highlights policy gaps and therefore a policy brief will come out of this study.

While this is a case study of Mutale, the issues discussed in the thesis transcend geographical specificity. Although the study was done under the auspices rural development, other entities such as the LIS community, community development, policy development sector, education and ICT community will find it very useful. The empirical data sets presented in this dissertation have the potential to benefit people beyond the research site where the data was generated. Lastly the study made concrete specific and general recommendations to the identified problems facing rural communities.

Table 6.4 Interpreting scholarship in the field of librarianship

	Scholarship of discovery	Scholarship of teaching	Scholarship of application	Scholarship of integration
1. Weiser 1998	Generation and communication of new knowledge Development and refinement of methods	Develops and communicates new understanding and insights Develops and refines new contents and methods Fosters lifelong learning behaviour	Developments and communicates new technologies Fosters inquiry and invention Develops and refines new methods	Synthesizes & communicates new or different understanding of knowledge or technology and its relevance
2. Wirth, 2010	The value of library scholarship is not measured solely by where one publishes. It includes assessment of the author's scholarly thinking and ability to communicate to the appropriate audience	Information literacy for users; Develop innovative methods to train	Communicating to a local audience often has value as both service and scholarship addresses problems and issues encountered in library work and professional service commitments..	Pulls together ideas and concepts across disciplines to come up with new perspectives. Examples include collaborations with computer science or business management examining library processes and services. Scholarship of Application
3. Hofmeyer, 2007	The scholarship of discovery is understood as original research that expands or challenges current knowledge in a discipline Suitable for academia to support Inter-disciplinary partnerships for multifocal human problems	The scholarship of teaching must extend beyond simply transmitting information to a process that is also transforming and extending the learning of students and scholars involves stimulating active learning, critical thinking and the commitment to life-long learning	Application scholarship directly links other forms of scholarship with practice this scholarly activity allows dynamic creativity, allows new public policies, allows theory and practice to renew each other	Integration work is creative connectedness, interpretation and synthesis, so is closely related to discovery,
4. Lowry, 2004	New knowledge	Seen as "Sub-discipline "of librarianship Train users in computers and searching	Most suitable for practising librarian Advances best practices Bibliographies, websites Create and improve teaching techniques	Applying management and organizational theory to library Working with computer science to develop tools investigations into the application of learning theory to instructional activities; employing communications theory in the study of reference work;
5. St. Clair & Miller, 2000	Information organisation User needs Preservation and access	Create and improve teaching techniques Effectiveness of online tutorials		Recommended researching effectiveness of "mzansi libraries online" with the local library to see how the computers are being used and also partnering with specialist in computer training to impart computer skills on the users. Partnering with schools, universities, FETs local organisations and government departments to bring development to the people through strategic service provision could popularise the library and place it at its place; as the hub of the community
6. Matodzi 2018 (proposed)	Model for functionality of rural public libraries. Framework is new discovery that should be headed by government as it mirrors the perceptions of the people most affected by the less functional library at present	Reiterates recommendation to train library users and librarian in digital skills. Reaffirms lifelong learning through training and retraining of librarians to train users in new and emerging trends.	Recommends development of a website and other online marketing tools such as library facebook page as well as library engaging in periodic users' surveys. Stakeholder consultations and engagement should also be practiced by the library if any buy-in by the community is to be realised.	

Source: Adapted from College & Research Libraries

Contribution to Scholarship of Application

The four dimensions of scholarships as described in table 6.4 are better suited to academic institutions where they are used as evidence in support of promotion of academics into higher posts (Hofmyer *et al.*, 2007; St Clair & Miller, 2000; Lowry, 2004). The scholarship of application is the most suitable for practising librarians who are at the forefront of putting into practice new innovations (Lowry, 2004; Philbin, 2018). This study recommended that the library should consider creating a website, where useful information about the library can be posted and other useful tutorials and videos could be embedded for users to consult online. Another contribution is the need to benchmark the Mzansi Libraries Project with other rural libraries who are already on board. Such a move would ensure best practice as librarians can learn from each other's experiences, be they successes or 'failures'.

Communities value those interventions that could increase access to needed information to improve their lives. Measures such as policies, resource materials, technical assistance and presentations should be taken into account when evaluating the scholarship of application (Hofmeyer, 2007). The implications are that the library at Mutale should make it a priority that the recommendation to market the library particularly via social platforms where users are already showing a great presence is headed. This will increase its visibility, market the resources and services that are available, increase usage and make it easier for the library to justify asking for more funds from the government or other possible donors. Not heading these recommendation will result in a lost opportunity to inform the community for individual and communal development.

Contribution to the scholarship of teaching and learning

The scholarship of teaching is seen as a "sub-discipline" for librarianship (Lowry, 2004) because practicing librarians already engage library users in information literacy training. The study recommended that users should be trained in using the computers and searching online information in order to be independent in navigating the digital platforms. The library was shown to have inadequate material; this shortcoming can be circumvented by provision of access to online resources available through the web. Training library users in digital skills ensures that rural library users are not disadvantaged by continued shortage of information; plus it complies with the national and international imperatives to be an enabler of information access, contributing

to agenda 2030 of the international sustainable development goals. Since training should include evaluation of the content presented and the presenter, training of library users could give an indication of the knowledge imparted is beneficial to those trained, thereby giving an indication of whether the librarian is knowledgeable as one of the recommendations made by the community of an ideal librarian. If any skills gaps are identified, an opportunity for training and retraining of the librarian could be evident. Engaging in information literacy for the users ensures lifelong learning behaviour and encourages the librarians to develop innovative methods to train (Wirth, 2010). This contribution is deemed important as training takes into consideration the dynamic environment in which librarianship is practiced and the necessary interventions that should be effected to keep users abreast of innovations.

Contribution to the Scholarship of Discovery

It is of utmost importance that research results should be published in reputable journals that can be subjected to peer review and be widely disseminated (Hofmeyer, 2007). The study contributes information needs of the local library (which could possibly be similar to needs of communities in other rural areas), collection development issues, access issues as well as ICTs challenges. It is envisaged that the proposed model would be vetted and regulated through peer evaluations via publications that will come from this study.

Contribution to the scholarship of integration

Today, it is rare to find researchers still working in disciplinary silos. Inter-disciplinary partnerships are deemed more appropriate to respond to multi-focal, complex human problems (Hofmeyer, 2007; Igbinovia, 2017). Moreover, to secure funding it is better to work in collaboration with others who are doing related work to generate knowledge and new approaches. The library can collaborate with IT practitioners to tailor-make specific online services that speak to the needs of the community.

This study contributes to the scholarship of integration by transcending traditional librarian role of supporting other researchers with information and contributing new information to the body of knowledge through this study. Generally librarians are not active researchers and thus are not evaluated on that performance area. Engaging in this research made it possible to embed in the

rural area of Mutale where the community can really benefit from enhanced services in their local library. Embedded librarianship takes the library to the targeted recipients irrespective of where they are. By engaging in this study the investigator was able to appreciate and integrate day to day experiences with the “rigors and methodology of research” (Mitchell and Morton, 1992), which are practiced only by academic librarians. The research was also able to integrate principles endemic in rural development and library science, since information cuts across all subject fields. The aim of this research was to contribute toward rural community development and recommendations made could help bring that development if heeded by the relevant authorities concerned.

Contribution to Scholarship of Engagement

The scholarship of engagement has at its core emphasis on active and interactive connections with communities outside of a given entity. It is comprised of four dimensions of scholarship, namely: discovery, integration, application and teaching (Gruber, 2017; Rowland & Knap, 2015; Bonnici & Ma, 2018). Engagement can focus on any of the afore-mentioned scholarships. Hence this study contributes to the scholarship of engagement through engaging the community surveyed in research that unravelled challenges on the ground amplifying the rural community’s voice on rural development issues. Engaging key informants on issues militating against development of the community surveyed also added a dimension of integration of LIS and rural development issues, education. Further, dissemination of results to the profession through conference presentations and articles for publication, lends the discovery of this research to peer review, which also enriches the findings through discoverability. Policy brief for the government and soliciting views of key informants on the proposed model all speak to the scholarship of engagement (Rowland & Knapp, 2015)

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APPENDIX A Ethical Clearance

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

NAME OF RESEARCHER/INVESTIGATOR:
Ms TA Matodzi

Student No:
11501440

PROJECT TITLE: A model for enhanced functionality of public libraries as hubs of information for rural community development: Mutale case study.

PROJECT NO: **SARDF/16/IRD/10/2208**

SUPERVISORS/ CO-RESEARCHERS/ CO-INVESTIGATORS

NAME	INSTITUTION & DEPARTMENT	ROLE
Prof J Francis	University of Venda	Promoter
Dr M Marjoro	University of Venda	Co-Promoter
Ms TA Matodzi	University of Venda	Investigator - Student

ISSUED BY:
UNIVERSITY OF VENDA, RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Date Considered: August 2016

Decision by Ethical Clearance Committee Granted

Signature of Chairperson of the Committee:

Name of the Chairperson of the Committee: Prof. G.E. Ekosse




University of Venda
PRIVATE BAG X5050, THOHAYANDOU, 09501, LIMPOPO PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA
TELEPHONE (015) 962 8504/8313 FAX (015) 962 9060
"A quality driven financially sustainable, rural-based Comprehensive University"

APPENDIX B Permission to conduct the study



Private Bag X5066
Thohoyandou
0950
Limpopo Province
Tel: 015 962 7500
Fax: 015 962 4020

Ref: 14/3
Enq: Nempumbuluni T.C
Date: 07 March 2017

TO: MS Matodzi T.A. (Researcher)

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT MUTALE COMMUNITY LIBRARY.

1. The above matter has reference
2. The researcher, T.A. Matodzi of student number 11501440 at University of Venda's institute of Rural Development had requested permission to conduct research at Mutale Community Library: **Research project Title: "A model for enhanced functionality of public Libraries as hubs of information for rural community development: Mutale case study."**
3. This letter notifies you that Thulamela Municipality's Department of Community Services grants you permission to conduct research at Mutale Community Library as requested. The permission is granted with the understanding that the information must be collected for research purpose only and should be accorded the confidentiality status it deserves.
4. However, the researcher is also advised to request the same from the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture Limpopo Province as the Municipality has a partnership with the Department on Mutale Community Library.
5. For possible policy change consideration and sharing innovative information and ideas, the Municipality will appreciate receiving the final report on completion of the research

Kind regards



Senior Manager: Community Services



28569

**THULAMELA
MUNICIPALITY**

APPENDIX C : Participant Consent Form

Name of Researcher	T.A. MATODZI
Title of the study	A framework for enhanced functionality of public libraries as hubs of information for rural community development: Mutale case study.

Introduction

- The purpose of this study is to get the views of the community with regards to the library services offered by the local public library.
- You are chosen as a possible respondent because you fit the criteria for a group of youth, adults or children.
- Please read and understand this form before you agree to take part in the study.

Purpose of the study

- The purpose of this study is to develop a customer-preferred model based on the responses from the community itself during the focus group interviews that will be held.
- Please note that the findings will be published in form of a thesis and also published articles in professional journals; and may also be presented as a conference paper.

Procedure for conducting the study

Should you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to be part of a focus group of either adults, youth or children. You will be expected to answer all questions asked without any fear of intimidation from both fellow participants and the researcher. You will also be asked to participate in a form of gaming to rank the responses that the group would have given. At the end of the study you will be asked again to be part of a workshop comprising all the respondents in the study to get feedback about the study. During this workshop you will have an opportunity to corroborate the findings and also do ranking of responses as one group comprising all the focus groups.

Risks of being in this study

The researcher does not expect any foreseeable risks.

Benefits of being in the study

All participants will have an opportunity to shape how they want their local public library to serve them; voice their preferences as to what they would like to have in their library.

Confidentiality

Participation in this study is anonymous. No names will be linked to any of the participants. Video and voice recordings will be used solely for the purpose of augmenting the written responses. These will be kept under a locked cabinet during the study and will be accessed only by the researcher. After production of the thesis the video and voice records will be deleted from the recording devices.

Payments

Participation in the study is voluntary. However, participants will be catered for with light snacks and drinks.

Right to ask Questions

You are free to ask any questions about the study before, during or after the research. Should the need arise feel free to contact me at this telephone number (015 962 8325) during office hours.

Right to withdraw or refuse to participate in the study

You are allowed to refuse to participate or leave the study at any time with no fear of being victimized. You may also request that information you have already given should not be utilized in the study.

Please circle the appropriate response in the next section

The researcher has satisfactorily explained the research to me verbally/ and or in a written form **YES / NO**

I understand that the length of the research will not exceed two hours; and will involve focus group discussions with video and audio recordings. **YES / NO**

I also understand that I can exit the study at any time and offer no explanations. **YES / NO**

I understand that at no stage will my identity be made public by the researcher. **YES / NO**

I understand that audio and video recordings of the study will be appropriately disposed when the research is completed. **YES /NO**

I have been given a copy of this form for my own records and I freely consent to take part in this study.

Signature:

or

Guardian

Date:

APPENDIX D: Interview Guide – Key Informants

A MODEL FOR ENHANCED FUNCTIONALITY OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES AS HUBS OF INFORMATION FOR RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: MUTALE CASE STUDY

By

T.A. Matodzi

PhD in Rural Development

Guide for Conducting Face to Face Interviews and focus group discussion with Key Informants in Mutale Municipality

- 1) What do you consider to be strengths of the library
- 2) What do you consider to be the weaknesses of the library?
- 3) What must be done in order to have a library that satisfy users' needs?

APPENDIX E: Interview Guide – Adults, Youth and Children

A MODEL FOR ENHANCED FUNCTIONALITY OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES AS HUBS OF INFORMATION FOR RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: MUTALE CASE STUDY

By

T.A. Matodzi

PhD in Rural Development

Interview Guide for Conducting Face to Face Interviews and focus groups in Mutale Municipality

- 1) What are the characteristics of a public library that you believe will be useful to you?
- 2) Are the local public libraries meeting your expectations? Why?
- 3) What type of information do you need in order to make decisions that will improve your lives?
- 4) Is the information referred to in question three readily available to you through the local public libraries?
- 5) What are the characteristics that you think a librarian should possess?
- 6) What must be done in order to have a library that adequately meets your information needs?

APPENDIX F: Survey Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE

(Please answer all questions in this questionnaire)

GENERAL INFORMATION

Please select an appropriate response by indicating with an X in the applicable box or/and as per instructions

1. State your gender

Female	<input type="checkbox"/>
Male	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Indicate your age group, years?

7-12	<input type="checkbox"/>	13-20	<input type="checkbox"/>	21-35	<input type="checkbox"/>	36-45	<input type="checkbox"/>	46 – 60	<input type="checkbox"/>	More than 60	<input type="checkbox"/>
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3. What is your marital status?

a) Single	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Married	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Divorced	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Widowed	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. What is your profession, school-going status, etc.?

Still in primary school	Still in secondary school	Still in high school	Completed matric	Dropped Out of school	Tertiary studies, part time	Tertiary studies, Full time	Working Part time	Working Full time	Unemployed
-------------------------	---------------------------	----------------------	------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------------	-----------------------------	-------------------	-------------------	------------

5. For how long have you been using the local public library?

2 years +	<input type="checkbox"/>	Less than 2 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	Never used the library	<input type="checkbox"/>
-----------	--------------------------	-------------------	--------------------------	------------------------	--------------------------

6. How often do you use the local public library located in Tshilamba?

Once a week	<input type="checkbox"/>	Several days a week	<input type="checkbox"/>	monthly	<input type="checkbox"/>	A few times A year	<input type="checkbox"/>	I never use the library	<input type="checkbox"/>
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7. How far from home do you travel to get to the library?

Less than 2km		More than 2 km	
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A. Type of information needed for personal use and community development

8. The ideal library

8.1 Please rate the following characteristics of the public library you like most

(Please tick appropriate response – Key 1 = not important; 2 = somewhat important; 3 = important; 4 = very important; 5 = extremely important)

	1	2	3	4	5
Has current books on all subjects in stock					
Computers for word processing are readily available and always in good working order					
Computers are connected to reliable internet					
A Wi-Fi hotspot for mobile devices is available					
It usually opens for long operational hours					
Chairs in the library are comfortable to use					
The library building is always clean, including toilets					
There is reliable potable running water					
Ablution facilities have running water and are always cleaned					
Staff members are friendly and helpful					
There are maker spaces (creativity spaces)					
The library has meeting spaces					
There is ample parking for users					
The building is of high structural quality					
The building is big enough for reading and other activities					
Telephone services are available					
Library services are regularly communicated and marketed to users					
Users have opportunities to give feedback on services offered by the library					

	Library conducts periodic user surveys and uses the results to improve the quality of its services					
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8.2 Availability of materials in the library (key 1 = not available; 2 = partly available; 3 = available; 4 = not sure)

		1	2	3	4
a)	Current books on all subjects				
b)	Major reference works such as Encyclopaedias and dictionaries				
c)	Books on arts and crafts				
d)	Leisure magazines				
e)	Daily newspapers				
f)	Government documents				
g)	Calendars of universities and colleges				
h)	Audio-visual materials				
i)	Electronic databases				
j)	Children's materials				
k)	Self-help materials				

8.3 Type of information needed to make informed decisions (1 = not important; 2 = somewhat important; 3 = important; 4 = very important; 5 = extremely important)

		1	2	3	4	5
a)	Health-related					
b)	Educational					
c)	Culture and leisure					
d)	Business and economic development					
e)	Government and governance					
f)	Digital information					
g)	Communication (e-mail and online social platforms such as Facebook, slideshare, Researchgate, Youtube, etc.)					

8.4 Improvements to the library that can enhance functionality of the local public library

Key: 1 = not important; 2 = somewhat important; 3 = important; 4 = Very important; 5 = extremely important)

	View/Perception	1	2	3	4	5
a)	Wi-fi access for personal mobile devices					
b)	DVDs and audio materials					
c)	Library website/webpage					
d)	Books on school subjects					
e)	Homework assistance service					
f)	Children's story time					
g)	Books to support distance learning programmes					
h)	Online databases					
i)	Daily newspapers and Magazines for leisure time					
j)	Facilities for eating and smoking					
k)	Previous matric and distance learners' question papers					
l)	Computer training					
m)	Library orientation/training					
n)	Workshops facilitated by the library					
o)	Inter-library loan facility					
p)	Books on fiction					
q)	Books on arts and culture					
r)	Books on philosophy and religion					
s)	More computers to use to access the internet					
t)	Availability of online databases					
t)	Longer and improved internet access					
u)	Access to library resources from home computers					
v)	Clean building and well-kept surroundings					
w)	Longer opening hours, including Saturdays					
x)	Library working closely in partnership with local schools					
Y	Library acting as a repository of information of/for local community development projects					
z)	Meeting spaces for the local community					

B. Level of satisfaction of children, youth and adults with the services of the local public library

9. Current state of library and available services

9.1 On the whole, how satisfied are you with the services of the public library?

Key: 1 = not satisfied; 2 = somewhat satisfied; 3 = satisfied; 4 = very satisfied; 5 = extremely satisfied

1	2	3	4	5
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9.2 Tell us how you feel about the following currently in your local library:

Key: 1 = poor; 2 = fair; 3 = good; 4 = very good; 5 = excellent

	1	2	3	4	5
a) Availability of current books on all subjects					
b) Working condition of computers for word processing					
c) Adequacy of working computers					
d) Internet access using computers					
e) Wi-Fi hotspot for mobile devices					
f) Duration of opening hours					
g) Comfortability of chairs					
h) Cleanliness of building					
i) Reliability of supply of potable water					
j) Reliability of supply of running water in ablution facilities					
k) Librarian services					
l) Maker spaces (creativity spaces)					
m) Meeting spaces					
n) Quiet spaces for reading/working					
o) Using reference materials					
p) Children's programmes					
q) Ease of borrowing library materials					
r) Safety of users in the library					
s) Security of library materials					
t) Availability of security staff					
u) Helpfulness and pleasantness of staff					
v) Staff knowledge about the library					

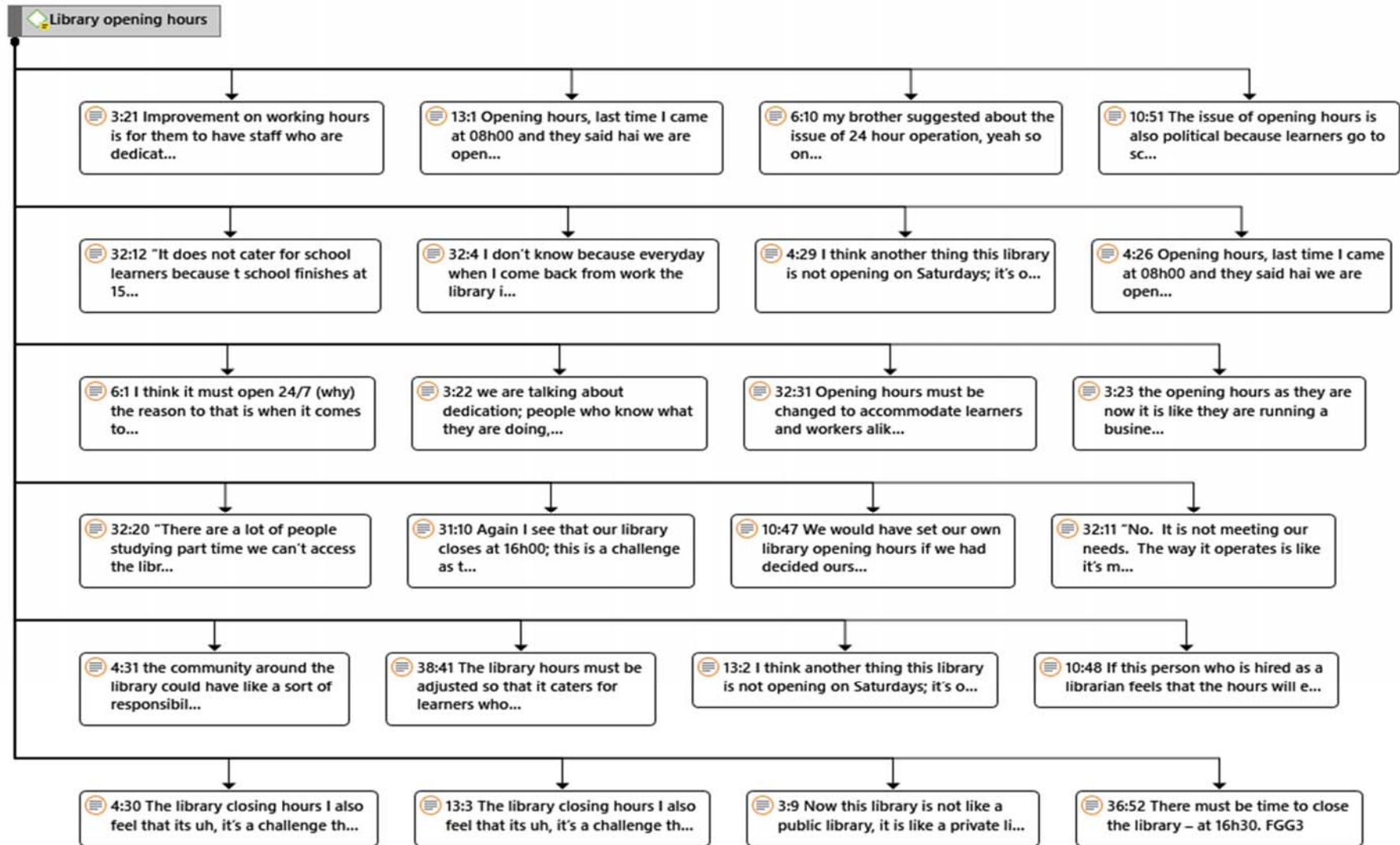
w) Good communication by staff					
x) Availability of and assistance by staff					

C. Challenges faced by children, youth and adults in using the local public library

10. **Please rate the following aspects relating access and accessibility?** Key: 1= not satisfactory; 2 = somewhat satisfactory; 3 = satisfactory 4 = very satisfactory; 5 = not sure

		1	2	3	4	5
a)	Appeal of library building					
b)	Ventilation and lighting in the library					
c)	Appeal of garden and landscaping surrounding the library					
d)	Functional and comfortable library furniture					
e)	Availability of books and other written materials					
f)	Distance from home to the library					
g)	Library opening hours					
h)	Librarian services					
i)	Number of computers in the library					
j)	Ease of access to the internet					
k)	Cleanliness in the library and its surroundings					
l)	Maintenance of available equipment					
m)	Security services for users and safety of materials					
	Control of noise					
n)	Marketing of library services					
o)	Dedicated quiet and discussion spaces					
p)	Time allocated for internet use					
q)	Signs and signage					
r)	Customer care by the library staff					
s)	Involvement of the community by giving feedback on services					
t)	Extent to which library staff accept inputs on how to make the library better					
u)	Availability of library IT support					

Appendix G: Adults, youth and children's views on library opening hours



Appendix H: Ideal library characteristics indicating number of responses

