

**Attributes of Ideal Grassroots Community Leaders for Sustainable Rural
Development: The Case of Ward Committees in Vhembe District Municipality of
South Africa**

By

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DECLARATION

I, Nemathithi Awelani Jeanette, hereby declare that this research dissertation for Masters in Rural Development (MRDV) Degree submitted to the Institute for Rural Development at the University of Venda, has not been submitted previously for any degree at this or any other university. It is original in design and in execution, and all reference material contained therein has been duly acknowledged.

Signature: _____  _____

Date: _____ 16 July 2024 _____

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To my parents Nyawasedza Maria Nemauluma and Ntshavheni Andries Nemathithi

ABSTRACT

Most municipalities in South Africa have been struggling to put in place functioning Ward Committees across the country. It is crucial to have an effective Ward Committee that can facilitate processes that lead to the improved well-being of the residents of the local community. The study explored the attributes of ideal grassroots community leaders for sustainable development, focusing on the case of ward committees in Ha-Mashau area. The specific objectives were to determine the community-preferred qualities of persons eligible to serve in ward committees and to determine whether age and gender of community members influence their perceptions. An exploratory sequential mixed method design was adopted for this study. Purposive sampling and stratified random sampling were applied to draw a sample of 57 and 120 participants from the residents of Ha-Mashau community for Phase 1 and Phase 2 respectively. Focus group discussions (FGDs) and a Likert-type scale questionnaire were used to collect data. Thematic content analysis, Descriptive statistics, Man Whitney & Kruskal Wallis tests from (SPSS) were run for analysis. The findings revealed several crucial attributes of ideal grassroots community leaders, including strong communication skills, a genuine commitment to community development, a strong personality, fair educational background, and accessibility to the community. Age influenced community members' perceptions of the need (1) to consider women for ward committee membership, (2) for aspiring leaders to be empathic, and (3) for leaders to show love and respect for the people. Furthermore, adult community members prefer ward committee members who are “dedicated to community development work” than their youthful counterparts. These findings contribute to the existing literature on grassroots leadership and offer practical insights for policymakers, development practitioners and community members aiming to foster sustainable development in similar contexts. It is recommended that policymakers and practitioners consider the importance of the identified attributes and their contribution to sustainable development when implementing programs aiming to enhance leadership capacity.

Keywords: Leadership attributes, community leaders, sustainable development, Ward Committee, community perceptions, age and gender

In this study, the attributes of ideal grassroots community leaders essential for sustainable rural development were investigated. Specifically, this was done through the lens of Ward Committees in the Mashau area of Vhembe District Municipality, South Africa. The research focused on the challenge of ineffective Ward Committees. An exploratory sequential mixed-method design was used. It involved 177 participants across two phases, which employed purposive and stratified random sampling methods. Data were collected through focus group discussions and a questionnaire requiring responses on a Likert-type scale. Thematic content analysis was conducted for the qualitative data collected in phase 1. With respect to the quantitative data gathered in phase 2, the Kruskal Wallis and Mann Whitney statistical tests were carried out using SPSS. It was indicated that effective grassroots community leaders should have strong communication skills, a commitment to local development, a robust personality, relevant educational background and accessibility. Age and gender significantly influenced community perceptions of these attributes ($P < 0.05$). Older community members placed a higher value on empathy, respect and dedication to community work compared to younger members ($P < 0.05$). This highlighted the importance of these attributes in leadership roles. Furthermore, older participants emphasized the need for including women in leadership positions more than their younger counterparts ($P < 0.05$), suggesting that age influenced community perceptions of gender inclusion in leadership roles. However, both male and female respondents demonstrated similar views on the attributes necessary for effective leadership of Ward Committee members, thus indicating a consensus on these aspects regardless of gender ($P > 0.05$). Regarding commitment to community development, a notable preference was observed among adult community members for leaders who were dedicated to development work compared to younger members ($P < 0.01$). Perceptions on communication skills and accessibility of Ward Committee members did not differ due to age or gender ($P > 0.05$), indicating a general agreement among community members on these attributes. Overall, the results of the current study underscored the need for inclusive leadership approaches that reflected diverse community perspectives. Empathy and commitment were regarded as critical attributes for effective grassroots leadership. These insights provided valuable recommendations for policymakers and development practitioners aiming to enhance Ward Committee effectiveness and promote sustainable development in rural contexts.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

WC	Ward Committee
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
IDP	Integrated Development Planning
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
IAP2	International Association for Public Participation
RRMR	Rhine Ruhr Metropolitan Region

CHAPTER 1:INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the study

Grassroots Community leadership is defined by O'Toole (2019) as a type of leadership that is led by the people, rather than by a small group of elites. These leaders are typically motivated by a desire to make a positive change in their community, and they often work to empower others to take action. Grassroots community leadership can be found in a variety of settings, including social movements, political campaigns, and community organizations. Memon (2020) refers to grassroots community leaders as individuals who possess an in-depth understanding of community issues, have strong ties and trust within the community, and have the ability to facilitate collective action, participate in decision-making processes and act as catalysts for community development. Good governance and leadership are key to the growth of any initiative. Effective grassroots leadership is required to achieve sustainable development. There is a need to match the development agenda with the competencies of grassroots leaders. This can be achieved through exploring what grassroots communities regard as ideal attributes of grassroots community leaders for sustainable development.

In 2015, world leaders adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as an agenda to guide the international community's efforts to improve the quality of life of people (FUND,2018). Bennett and Brickell (2018) pointed out that the western world has always viewed Africa as a place where corruption, dictatorial tendencies, greed, general misuse of power and incompetence characterize its leaders. These perceived inherent characteristics make the leaders undermine their own democracies. This was evidenced in Togo's 2018 legislative elections which major opposition parties boycotted (Koherent, 2020). Moreover, in December 2018 Togo's local elections that were crucial for democratization at the grassroots communities were postponed without any prior notice, mainly due to the simmering discontent of hardliners within the security forces and opposition parties' protest (Koherent, 2020).

Available literature shows that in metropolitan cities of Delhi, Chennai and Mumbai in India Ward committees are important vehicles for public participation in urban government

matters (Choragudi *et al.*, 2018; Park, 2017; Bose, 2021; Mukherjee, 2021). The 74th Constitutional Amendment Act of India made provision for the ward committee's creation aiming to promote citizen participation in urban governance. However, the experiences with Ward Committees in these Indian states have not been encouraging (Kuruville & Waingankar, 2013). Park (2017) confirms that Ward Committees hardly perform satisfactorily anywhere due to institutional design issues in terms of delegated tasks and finances, poorly organized civil society representation and also weak links to citizen organizations. In South Africa, a study on the roles of Ward Committees at Umzumbi Municipality revealed that Ward Committee members were not playing any significant role in integrated development planning (IDP) and their knowledge of the IDP process was very limited (Khuzwayo, 2009).

Effective leadership at grassroots community level should form the foundation for powerful nations that are democratic. Most countries have decentralized systems of governance, which entail electing new leaders within designated timeframes. The results of a study by Gherghina (2017) on direct democracy and subjective regime legitimacy in various Eastern European states showed that most European countries with inclusive legislation on direct democracy are those in Eastern Europe (Gherghina, 2017). Countries like Belgium, Czech Republic, Germany, and Norway do not allow for any direct involvement of citizens in decision making at the national level whereas Lithuania and Macedonia, each has four provisions for citizen participation at national level and none at local level (Gherghina, 2017). However, In the case of the Rhine Ruhr Metropolitan Region (RRMR) (Germany), the decentralized governance system contributes to a more inclusive and participatory governance process, while the performing planning system provides an opportunity for more negotiation and control for transformative planning (Asadzadeh *et al.*, 2022).

Stewart (2016) argued that local government gains legitimacy for decision-making through elections. He argues that local elections are made more meaningful by giving opportunities for directly selecting candidates that citizens trust, instead of choosing parties whose programme is supported by voters. This is the case in Germany where the

Executive Mayor is elected separately from Councilors and council elections often offer the opportunity to deviate from the list set up by political parties (Haus & Sweeting, 2016).

Reamonn (2020) states that African leadership in a community should focus on promoting oneness, truth, freedom, peace, reconciliation, justice, and right relations in the world. Since the 1994 elections, South Africa has moved to a new form of local governance which promotes public participation in policy making. In 1998, Ward Committees were introduced in the Republic of South Africa through the adoption of Local Government Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998. Introduction of this layer of governance was meant to give practical meaning to the basic political commitment of “The People shall govern” and to address basic national challenges such as underdevelopment, unemployment, stagnation and poverty (Cele, 2005).

One of the roles of a Ward Committee is to involve grassroots communities in IDP processes through facilitating community deliberations within wards. This is expected to result in the compilation of community needs and priorities, which inform municipal planning and budgeting processes. The IDP is a process through which Municipalities prepare a strategic development plan for a five-year period involving its citizens. It is expected that the IDP would help find the best solutions for achieving effective sustainable development (Cele,2005).

According to Naidoo & Ramphal (2018), Ward Committees are representative structures of the community and citizens who hold the responsibility of informing the Municipality about the aspirations, potentials and problems of the people they represent. In the 2007 Breede Valley Municipality policy for Ward Committee election in the Republic of South Africa, it is stated that any citizen is qualified to stand for elections. It considers a need for women to be equally represented to men. Furthermore, diversity and inclusion of previously disadvantaged persons, differently abled and the youth in the policy. In Delhi and Tamil Nadu areas of India there is no provision for inclusion of members from the civil society while other areas restrict the inclusion of civil society to three members within the jurisdictions of the Ward Committee. the jurisdictions of the Ward Committee (Sharma *et al.*, 2022).

Dean (2017) argues that ever since South Africa introduced the new governance systems underpinning public participation in all spheres of the government, there has been widespread commitment to participatory democracy both within the government and grassroots communities. Despite this, in many instances' community members are committed to their development even though they lack the capacity to achieve that and the real empowerment to fulfill this role. Taking the issues raised above, the study aimed to identify the community-perceived qualities of persons eligible to serve in the Ward Committee as productive local representatives effective in driving and mobilizing for sustainable rural development. The study also examined the influence of age and gender on community member's perceptions regarding the qualities of ward committee members.

1.2. Problem Statement

Dean (2017) argues that many municipalities in South Africa have been struggling to put in place functioning Ward Committees across the country. The author further contends that the extent to which Ward Committees indeed bring community responses and proposals to bear on local government decision-making is not clear. There is a perception that Ward Committees are sometimes "captured" and used to advance the material and political ambitions of specific individuals instead of encompassing the interests and demands of communities. According to Theron (2016), participatory development is still not a life changing process in most of the poor around South Africa. Similarly, findings in a study by Siphuma (2016) on assessment of the role of public participation in IDP, at Thulamela municipality revealed that change agents in Thulamela lacks required knowledge to engage communities as well as fail to mobilize beneficiaries resulting in ward committees being less effective (Siphuma, 2016). This is not different to Ha-Mashau area where there are allegations that Ward Councillors have a direct hand in picking Ward Committee members in line with their political affiliations. This results in Ward Committees being extensions of party structures instead of encompassing the full range of interests in communities. This necessitates community members to elect leaders who possess attributes that matches their community visions. The purpose of this study was to acquire the community perceived ideal attributes of community leaders to lead sustainable development in a rural community.

1.3. Significance of the Study

Leadership is crucial in virtually every aspect of society. This makes it important to have an effective Ward Committee that can facilitate processes that lead to improved wellbeing of the residents of the local community. The outcomes of this study are meant to help members of Ward Committees recognize the special set of skills needed to lead sustainable rural development work. To develop an assessment tool that can be used when electing Ward Committee members. Based on the preliminary literature on the topic under discussion (Modise, 2017; Masuku & Jili, 2019; Gherghina, 2017; Siphuma, 2016; Khuzwayo, 2009), there is limited knowledge on issues of Ward Committees elections and their representatives. Most scholars focus on assessing the functionality of Ward Committees as a mechanism for public participation. Therefore, the study uncovered the community-perceived attributes of individuals eligible to be Ward Committee members for sustainable development.

1.4. Objectives of the study

The study aimed to determine the rural community-perceived attributes of ideal grassroots leaders for sustainable development. The study was carried out with a specific focus on Ward Committees. The specific objectives were to:

- a) Identify the community-preferred qualities of persons eligible to serve in Ward Committees;
- b) Examine whether age and gender influence the community perceptions on qualities of persons eligible to serve in Ward Committees; and
- c) Propose an assessment tool for use while electing members of a Ward Committee.

1.5. Research questions

- a) What are the ideal qualities of a Ward Committee member?
- b) Do age and gender of candidates influence people's choices when electing Ward Committees?
- c) What tool can be used to guide the election of ideal members of a Ward Committee?

1.6. Hypotheses

Sun, Zhu and Chan (2016) maintain that a hypothesis proceeds from a statement of the research problem, serving as a point of departure and also as a directive for planned research. The study adapted the following hypothesis:

Ho¹: 'Respondent' age has no effect on perception of grassroots communities regarding the ideal attributes of persons eligible to serve as members of a Ward Committee.

Ho²: 'Respondent' gender has no effect on perception of grassroots communities regarding the ideal attributes of persons eligible to serve as members of a Ward Committee.

1.7. Theoretical Framework

Contemporary research on various concepts, including charismatic, transactional, transformational, and servant leadership place emphasis on the significance of personality traits. Lord et al. (2020) recognize these concepts as implicit leadership theories, seeking to explain the underlying factors contributing to the success or failure of leaders. Gandolfi and Stone (2018) explain servant leadership as a practical philosophy that prioritizes serving others before leading. This expands service to individuals and institutions. Hankins (2019) expands this understanding by defining a servant leader as an individual who prioritizes the needs of others above their own and strives to improve the well-being of individuals, particularly the vulnerable and underprivileged in society. Furthermore, Frantz (2018) contends that becoming a servant leader requires something beyond human knowledge and choices.

In the current study, the Greenleaf (1977) servant leadership theory was adopted. It explains that servant leaders consciously decide to prioritize serving others and place their aspirations, needs and interests above their own. Their primary objective is to serve and fulfil the needs of others (Greenleaf, 1997; Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015; Eva et al., 2019; Eva et al., 2021; Bragger et al., 2021). Greenleaf identifies encouragement, collaboration, trust, foresight, listening, ethical use of power and empowerment as essential qualities of a servant leader. It is worth noting that servant leadership is regarded

as both effective and ethical due to its emphasis on values and attributes such as altruism, responsible morality, accountability, empowerment, integrity, trust, service, modelling, appreciation of others, vision and transformative influence. All these attributes of servant leadership make the Greenleaf theory suitable for the context of the current study. Servant leaders focus on others rather than themselves, understanding their role as servants.

This study was carried out to explore the attributes of ideal grassroots community leaders for sustainable development, specifically focusing on Ward Committees in Ha-Mashau village of Collins Chabane Local Municipality in Vhembe District of South Africa. The Greenleaf servant leadership theory helped facilitate the exploration of ideal attributes of effective leaders for sustainable rural development by both the researcher and the participants. Also, the theory was chosen because of its potential to provide a deeper understanding of leadership values for institutional transformation and their contribution to sustainable development.

1.8. Definition of Operational key Concepts

1.8.1. Attributes

For the purpose of this study, *attributes* refer to the defining characteristics, qualities, beliefs, personality, looks and the relational self that is presented to other people in a society. Attributes are features or traits that can be observed, measured, or evaluated in order to gain a better understanding of the object or person being described (Babbie, 2015).

1.8.2. Community leaders

According to Pumpuang & Siedlarek (2017), community leaders are people who play specific roles and have a commonly agreed-on societal value and play a significant role in shaping and influencing a community. They are elected based on their occupational or organizational roles in the community, for example elected officials, church leaders, community organizers, and so on.

In the proposed study, community leaders are either elected or informal individuals who serve in institutions/organizations and structures with an authority to make decisions regarding matters affecting the people and areas they serve.

1.8.3. Ward Committees

Section 73 of the Municipal Structures Act 117 of 1998 (RSA, 1998a) recognizes Ward Committees as a function of Category B Municipalities with a collective, Mayoral or plenary executive system combined with wards. Naidoo & Ramphal (2018) regards a Ward Committee as an advisory body, which is independent and must be impartial and perform its functions without fear, favor or prejudice. This study defines ward committee as a local government body which provides a platform for residents to raise their concerns and participate in decision making processes.

1.8.4. Sustainable development

Sustainable development is a development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In process, sustainable development integrates environmental, social, and economic concerns into all aspects of decision making (Wang & Olsson, 2019). In this study, sustainable development refers to improved facilities, human development, food secure and improved community wellbeing.

1.9. Outline of the Research Project

The first chapter of this dissertation comprises of the background, statement of the research problem, significance, objectives and research questions, theoretical framework and clarification of key concepts. In Chapter two, the literature underpinning the research objectives was reviewed. Chapter three contains detailed methodology which includes the research design, area of the study and population, data collection and analysis methods and ethical considerations. Chapter four presents the results and discussions and Chapter five outlines' recommendations and conclusion of the study.

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CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

This chapter focused on a review of literature from scholarly databases on rural community-perceived attributes of ideal grassroots leaders for sustainable development. The literature of the study was guided by the following objectives: the community-preferred qualities of persons eligible to service in Ward Committees; and to determine whether age and gender influence perception of qualities of members of Ward Committee. The literature covered the perspective of the Ward Committee System as a mechanism for Public Participation for Sustainable Rural Development. Public Participation as an enabler for community development, Perspectives on effective leadership for sustainable rural development, age and gender consideration in local governance and the summary of the review.

2.2. Ward Committee System

2.2.1. Defining Ward Committee (WC)

Sekgala (2016) defined Ward Committee as a local-level administrative body that operates within a specific geographic area known as a ward or electoral division. It is typically established to promote participatory democracy and ensure grassroots representation in local governance. According to Silima & Auriacombe (2013) Ward committees' function as a representative structure of the communities and form a bridge by coordinating and facilitating effective communication between the municipal council and the citizens they represent. Similarly, (Thornhill & Madumo,2011) described Ward Committees as prominent channel for communication through which communities inform municipal councils about their needs, expectations and problems.

Establishment of Ward Committees

In India most states regard a ward committee as an important institution introduced by the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act (74th CAA) to promote citizen participation in urban governance (Sudeept & de Faria, 2017; Sivaramakrishnan, 2016; Choragudi *et al.*,

2018). A study on Ward Committees in India indicated that more than 10 electoral wards are combined to form a ward committee (Waingankar & Kuruvilla ,2013). Further, they indicated that the structure formation itself negate the purpose of wards committees which was to be more proximate to the local citizens of the respective wards. According to the Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG), the purpose of a Ward Committee is to promote participatory democracy by assisting communities and community organizations in the municipal processes. These processes include municipal budget, Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and review process, municipal performance management system, by-laws and provision of municipal services (Attah *et al.*, 2017). Ward Committees have emerged as key institutional mechanisms intended to contribute towards bringing about people-centred development, participatory and democratic local governance. According to Hicks & Buccus (2016), Ward Committees were introduced in municipalities as community structures to play a critical role in linking and informing the municipalities about the needs, aspirations, potentials and problems of the communities. Park (2017) sees the rationale for Ward Committees as a mechanism to supplement the role of elected councilors by creating a bridge between communities and political representatives as well as administrative structures of municipalities. However, this is seen not to be the case in South Africa as Choragudi *et al* (2018) argued that during apartheid era black South African were deprived an opportunity to participate in the process of making and implementing policies that affect them. Consequently, this legacy still exists in the democratic South Africa where change agents make decisions on behalf of grassroots communities negating the key objective to link communities with local municipalities (Modise, 2017). Literature above showed that Ward Committee structures were established as a vehicle to link grassroots communities and municipalities across the globe. However, their model and operational approach makes these structures less effective.

2.2.2. Guidelines for the Establishment and Operation of Municipal Ward Committee

The guidelines for the establishment and operation of the municipal Ward Committee were prepared by the Municipal Systems Act no:32 of 2000 and the Municipal Structural

Act no:117 of 1998. The guidelines supplement legislation by providing Guidelines to municipalities, Ward committee members and councilors on procedures to be followed in establishing ward committees. These guidelines indicate how Ward Committees are intended to operate and the conduct of ward committee members. The Guidelines requires ward committees to prepare an annual capacity building and training needs assessment for members of the committee (DPLG, 2005). It also requires members to be trained in accordance with the need assessment report.

Ward committees are required by the Guidelines to have quarterly meetings. Public meetings should also be convened regularly. These meetings are supposed to enable the ward committee and ward councilor to register the concerns and inputs of the community with regard to service delivery and other issues in the ward, and report back to the community on issues that affect the ward (DPLG, 2005). In contradiction to the requirements of Ward Committees, Thulamela Local Municipality ward public forums are held quarterly only to adhere to constitutional requirements as the public inputs are not placed as basis for municipality planning process (Siphuma, 2016). The author further contends that change agents are failing to mobilize the public for public forums and where these forums are held, most often they are postponed due to lack of quorum. This shows that even though the South African government developed and passed system acts and by laws to guide the operation and conduct of members of ward committee structures, there is a huge challenge when it comes to implementation. Assessment studies on functioning of Ward Committees revealed that members of ward committees are not capacitated enough to empower communities in taking initiative to develop their own communities (Modise, 2017; Siphuma, 2016; Khuzwayo, 2009). This will help members of ward committees better understand their expectations from both grassroots communities and municipal officials and also relate them to their current conduct.

2.2.3. Representation in Ward Committees

According to Municipal Structures Act of 1998 section 73 (RSA, 1988) all ward committees must comprise of the councilor who represent those wards in municipal council and other members not more than ten. Sekgala (2016) claims that a Ward Councilor is elected by residents within the ward during local elections to represent people

in municipal council and form as the chairperson of the Ward Committee. A Ward Councilors' role is to encourage and channel community and neighborhood engagement, local issues and local choice.

Ward committee members are representatives of the community elected by the community together with the Ward Councillor. They are representatives of the people in the wards, and they are required to have skills related to the empowerment of other community members and for them to perform their duties as representatives of the community effectively (Masuku & Jili, 2019). RSA (1988(73) (a) stipulates that a metro or local council is required to make rules which will regulate the procedure to elect the 10 members of a ward committee. However, this is different to the case of the India, Delhi and Tamil Nadu where there is no provision for inclusion of members from the civil society. The state of Maharashtra has restricted civil society representation to three members who are registered as voters in the wards within the jurisdictions of the wards committee (Sharma *et al.*, 2022). However, these representatives are nominated by the elected councilors making it difficult for them to act as truly independent voices (Sudeept & de Faria, 2017). According to Geddes (2018) in most European countries local elections are made more meaningful by giving citizens the opportunity to directly elect candidates that they trust, instead of choosing parties whose programme is supported by voters. This is the case in Germany where the executive mayor is elected separately from Councillors and council elections often offer the opportunity to deviate from the list set up by political parties (Kranenburg, 2020)

The general guidelines for establishment of municipal ward committees of South Africa requires the ward committee to pursue a diversity of interest groups and most importantly consider the need for women to be equitably presented in a ward committee. Gender equity should be pursued by ensuring that there is an even spread of men and women on a ward committee. Youth and people living with disability should not be left out as well as other unions, religious organizations and community forums. According to Cele (2005) the following election criteria may be applied for electing ward committee members:

- a) To be elected as a member of a ward committee, a person must be a registered voter in the ward

- b) A person is not eligible for election if he or she works for the metro, local municipality or the district municipality within which the local municipality is demarcated.
- c) A person should not be in arrears to the municipality for rates and service charges for a period longer than three months.
- d) A person should not be a rehabilitated insolvent.
- e) A person should not be elected who has been placed under curatorship.
- f) A person should not be elected who after February 1997 has been convicted of an offence and sentenced to imprisonment without the option of a fine for a period of not less than twelve months
- g) Persons of unsound mind who have been declared so by a competent court cannot be elected; and
- h) Members should be active in the sector or geographic area they represent. They should be motivated to work on the ward committee by their commitment to working for a better life for members of their constituency.

The above review showed that representation in Ward Committees differs by state where in some countries restrict civil society to a very limited number of representatives. However, South Africa pursues diversity of interest groups, therefore, a comparative research on the effectiveness of different models of these structures in promoting sustainable development is crucial.

2.2.4. The role of ward committee in Local Government and the Community

The role of Ward Committees is to make sure that the voters directly participate and partake in decisions made by the Council. They should be part and parcel of the processes and structures that affect their lives as ordinary citizens. The Ward Committee's main tasks are to communicate and consult with the community in respect of development and service plans (Diedericks & Seitholo, 2018). A Ward Committee as a direct and unique link to Municipal Council should increase resident's participation in

municipal decision making (Attah et al., 2017). Department of Provincial and Local Governance (DPLG ,2005) outlined the roles and powers of a ward committee as follows:

- a) To serve as an official specialized participatory structure in the municipality
- b) To create formal unbiased communication channels as well as co-operative partnerships between the community and the council
- c) Assist the ward councilor in identifying challenges and needs of residents.
- d) To serve as a mobilizing agent for community action within the ward
- e) Attending to all matters that affect and benefit the community.
- f) Acting in the best interest of the community
- g) Ensure active participation of the community in the Integrated Development Planning Process; the municipality's budgetary process; Decisions about the provision of municipal services; and decisions about by-laws.

As outlined by the Department of Provincial and Local Government, the structures are supposed to create unbiased communication channels, partnership and serve as mobilizing agents. This will help communities and change agents in light of what kind of leaders are needed for effective community action.

2.3. Public Participation for Sustainable Rural Developmental Process

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) contends that public participation is premised on the belief that people who are affected by a decision must be allowed space to contribute to what eventually becomes of that decision, and therefore must participate in the whole process of getting to that decision (IAP2, 2002). Public participation is the fundamental principle of local democracy which allows local communities to participate in crafting decisions which affect them, or in which they have an interest (Masuku & Jili, 2019). Internationally, there has been growing interest in finding ways to enhance public participation in matters of governance to realize the democratizing promise. According to Masuku & Jili (2019), public participation must lie at the heart of local governance if development at that level is to be developmental, inclusive

and people-centred. Mbhele (2017) stated that fundamentals of public participation may include the public's right to information, the right to complain and comment on issues, as well as the right to participate meaningfully in decision making processes. According to Siphuma (2016) Public Participation in South Africa has become the norm for engaging communities and stakeholders from provincial, district and local municipalities in decision making through national government Imbizos. The DPLG (2005) sets some guiding principles and assumptions to drive successful public participation. Among these principles (Andani, 2017) assumes that Ward committees mediate between the electorate and the elected institutions. At the local government level ward committees are a key component of community-based public participation. Looking at the above literature, it is evident that indeed Ward Committees are a key vehicle for community based public participation in South Africa. However, there is a need to adjust in operation of these structures where consultation with communities is involved on matters that affect them. This should capacitate both municipal officials and change agents that sustainable development can only be achieved when grassroots communities are included in the planning, decision making and initiatives on issues that affect their lives. The literature discusses the importance of public participation however, it is important to understand how ward committees can best facilitate community involvement on sustainable development initiatives.

2.4. Perspectives on effective Leadership for Sustainable Rural Development

Attah *et al* (2017) defines leadership as the art or process of influencing people to strive willingly and enthusiastically towards the achievement of the organization's purpose, objectives and goals. A community without leadership may not be equipped to mobilize resources or influence tourism planning which is also an aspect of community development (Dodds *et al.*, 2018). He further argued that the success of the local community initiative depends on the quality, creativity and commitment of its leadership in maintaining its daily affairs. Priest & Gass (2018) confirms that effective leadership within the community field is necessary in order to assert successful community action, encourage social well-being, and improve community viability.

2.4.1. Servant leadership

The concept of servant leadership was initiated by Robert Greenleaf (1971) and it has received substantial attention in the contemporary leadership field (Frantz, 2018; Hanks, 2019; Bragger et al., 2021). As already stipulated in the first chapter of this study, Greenleaf (1997) described servant leadership as a practical philosophy which supports people who choose to serve first and then lead as a way of expanding service to individuals and institutions. Servant-leadership encourages collaboration, trust, foresight, listening, and the ethical use of power and empowerment (Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2020). The notion of servant leadership emphasizes the leaders' duty to serve his/her followers, arguing that leadership arises out of a desire to serve rather than a desire to lead (Greenleaf, 1971; Eva *et al.*, 2021). This argument simply explains that Servant leaders make the conscious decision to serve others first and put their aspirations, needs, and interests above their own.

2.4.2. Transformational leadership

Transformational leadership was initiated by James Macgregor Burns (1978) in his seminar work *Leadership*. He described the interactions between leaders and their followers on a spectrum that ranges from transactional leadership to transformational leadership. Bernard M. Bass (1999) further developed Burns' work and replaced the term transforming to transformational. Transformational leadership inspires others to excel, considers the individual needs of others and stimulates people to think in new ways (Burns, 1996; Yukl, 2013). Both Burns 1978; Sarıköse & Türkmen, 2020) believed in two factors that describe transformational leadership which is Idealized influence and Inspiration. Sarıköse & Türkmen (2020) defined Idealized influence as the ability of a leader to serve as a role model and inspire followers through their actions, values, and ethical behavior. Through their idealized influence, transformational leaders create a sense of trust, loyalty, and identification among their followers. This, in turn, encourages followers to go beyond their self-interests and work towards achieving the collective goals and vision set by the leader (Tarker, 2019). Inspiration is closely associated with charismatic leadership and conveys the ability of leaders to motivate their followers and be dedicated to achieving the vision of the organization (Yukl, 2013).

The above perspective shows that a community without a leader is the same as a community without a vision. Also, there is no distinct difference between servant leaders and transformational leaders as both of these leaders' motive is to empower their followers to achieve the vision of the organization. These perspectives will help guide grassroots communities' elect leaders that are aligned with their community vision. Scholars explored different leadership styles. However, there is a need to explore deeper into the specific skills and knowledge needed for leaders to promote sustainable development within rural communities

2.5. Age and Gender Considerations in Leadership and Governance

In the modern era, women are generally underrepresented in government in most countries worldwide. In developing countries, women have had inadequate opportunities in social participation, especially in striving for political rights and power in the government and different institutions (Carmichael *et.al*, 2016). Although women are increasingly becoming leaders in politics, academia, and business the historical tendency of lacking women representation in local government institutions of South Africa still persists. Boossabong & Chamchong (2021) argued that people are indoctrinated into socially constructed norms of politics. They further explain that sex stereotype affects the public's disposition on which genders are fit for public office when it comes to women's representation in local government. Sex stereotyping assumes that masculine and feminine traits are intertwined with leadership. However, due to the aggressive and competitive nature of politics, many insist that participation in elected office requires masculine traits (Maclvor, 2016). In contradiction to Maclvor, Bass (1999) indicated that women tend to have more transformational characteristics than men. He further argued that women have more idealized influence, are more inspirational, and more individually considerate than their male counterparts.

Triana *et.al*. (2017) stated that female leaders are often evaluated less favorably than male leaders. They further argued that female leaders face challenges because they sometimes face conflicting demands between the female gender role and the leader role which sometimes lead to their poor performance in an organization. On the other hand, De Hoogh *et al*. (2015) argued that in a situation where a female is leading, female

followers might not be deemed as unconventional as where a female leader is leading male followers. Generally, men tend to hold more negative attitudes toward women in leadership than women and this is presumably because men are less likely to have experience with female leaders than women. Furthermore, men's group interest favors retaining leadership roles for men (Schneider & Bos, 2019).

Ozkazanc & Muntean (2018) argued that although women's movements have a very successful outcome on gaining equality towards women, other movement are taking different approaches on the basis of the universality of sex differences and the relation to the nation. It is the expected outcome of this study to reveal whether gender and age affect eligibility of a person to serve in a ward committee.

Literature has consistently linked lower rates of volunteering, charitable giving, and political engagement in youth around the globe. Terriquez (2017) argued that offering youth opportunities to engage in the public arena and volunteer associations can instill civic virtues and skills as members learn how to organize meetings, express their viewpoints, engage in collective decision making, and resolve common concerns. Flanagan & Levine (2016) stated that young people acquire durable habits, attitudes, and values during adolescence that can shape their long-term political interests, convictions, and commitments. Terriquez (2015b) mentioned that personality characteristics and other self-selection mechanisms that encourage joining adolescent activist groups in the first place are also likely to contribute to political participation in early adulthood. It is argued that if adolescents acquire a political analysis of social issues and gain hands-on experience in policy-oriented collective action they may become empowered to tackle social concerns in a public arena at a young age sustaining the future. Scholarly reviews showed that women still lack representation in Local Governance, whereas there are lower rates of volunteering, charitable giving, and political engagement in youth around the globe. There is a need to identify strategies to encourage women's participation and representation in leadership roles and exploring challenges faced by youth during participation in ward committees and identifying solutions.

2.6. Summary of Literature Review

The literature reviewed showed that the constitution of the Republic of South Africa and its supporting frameworks advocates for public participation with ward committees as a vehicle for such participation. However, institutions do not follow the constitutional processes and procedures guiding the establishment and operation of such institutions and this can possibly prevent the well-being of a community. Literature showed that failure of local government and change agents to integrate citizens in IDP development processes has a potential to reverse gains and lead to dissatisfaction and reputational risk for municipalities. The literature search also revealed that most scholars place their emphasis on performance of ward committees. There is an open gap for knowledge on ward committee representation linked to qualities of persons suitable to serve as effective members of ward committees. This study was undertaken to reveal such traits for sustainable development of rural communities.

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CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

Research methodology are the methods that the researcher uses when conducting the study which involves the application and learning of various techniques that can be used in the conduct of research, tests, experiments, surveys and critical studies (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). This chapter focuses on the description of the study area, selection of research design, population and sampling procedures, data collection and analysis methods and techniques, ethics concerning the study and expected outcomes from this study.

3.2. Description of the study area

The study was conducted at Ha-Mashau area. Ha-Mashau is situated in the Limpopo Province. According to the Local Government demarcations, Ha-Mashau is part of ward 8 of Collins Chabane Lim345 Local Municipality, under the jurisdiction of Vhembe District Municipality. Ha-Mashau village is located 50km from Makhado town and situated on the east of Makhado with coordinates (23°14'016.36" S; 30°8'019.30" E). Ha-Mashau borders Levubu on the southern side, Masia on the eastern side, Valdezia on the north and Bungeni on the southeast side. Ha-Mashau area is a communal land falling under Mashau Tribal Authority (MTA) and has a vegetation composition of savannah and grassland. The area has a population of 15 210 (889per km²) distributed in 15 residential zones (StatsSA, 2019). Mashau village is owned by state but administered by a tribal authority. The main land uses in the study area include livestock farming, wood harvesting, human settlement, and commercial subsistence agriculture. Sand mining and bricklaying are other forms of economic activities practiced in the village.

The area was selected due to its continuous protest for service delivery and the poor state of physical infrastructures such damaged roads and shortage of public facilities such as schools, clinics which are all necessary for sustainable rural development as highlighted

on the Municipal Capacity Assessment (Municipal Demarcation Board, 2018). The following figure shows location of the study area.

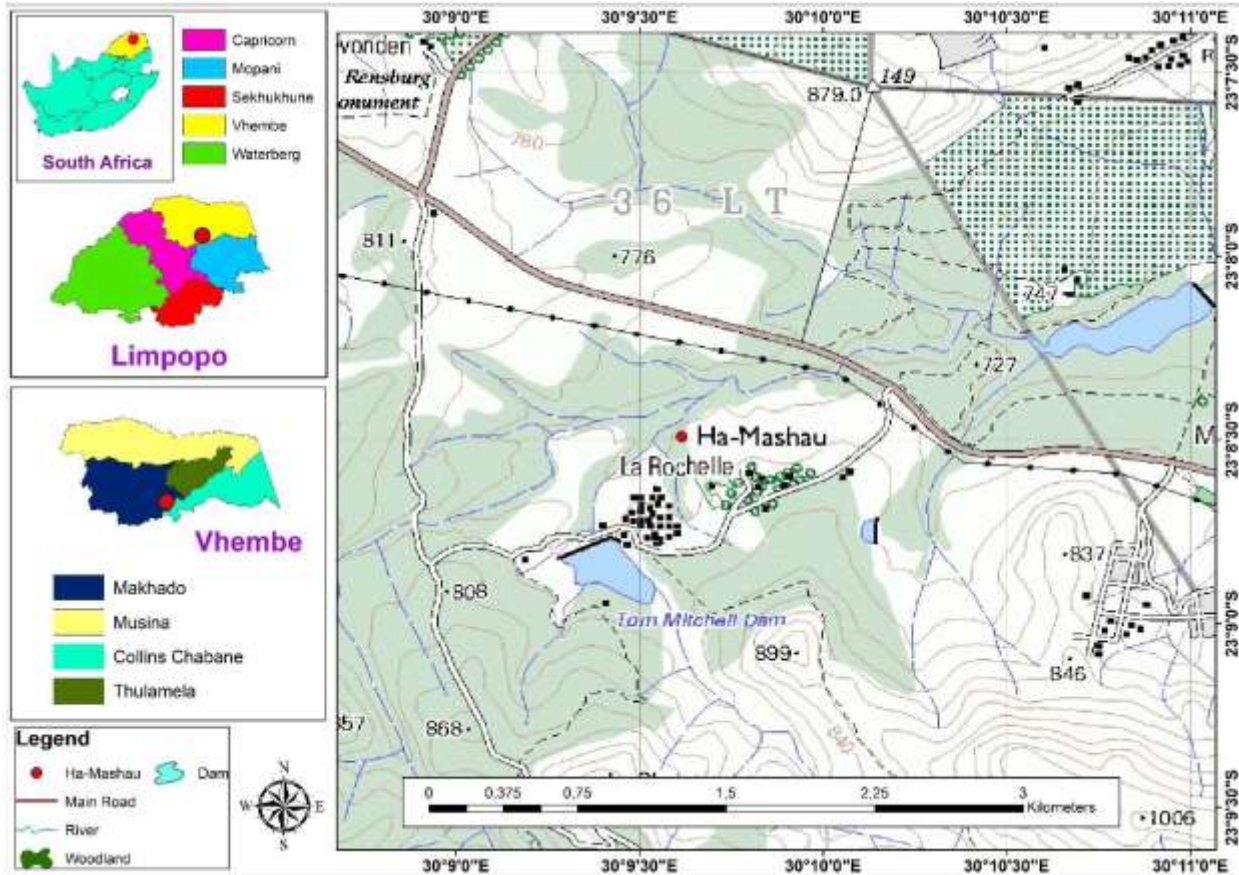


Figure 3. 1: Location of the study area: Ha-Mashau village, Collins Chabane Local Municipality (Google Map, 2019)

3.3. Research Design

Research design is a set of methods and procedures used in collecting and analyzing measures of the variables specified in the research problem (Creswell & Creswell 2017). The study adopted an exploratory sequential mixed method design. Maree (2018) described sequential exploratory mixed methods as a design where the qualitative component precedes the quantitative element. According to Veal (2017) sequential exploratory mixed methods design is ideal for explorations of new phenomena. The design was selected because of its assumed ability to broadly enable exploration and

understanding of community perceived attributes of persons eligible to serve in Ward Committee. The ability of quantitative method to explain the relationships found between variables. Furthermore, quantitative data will be able to confirm or reject the hypotheses.

The study was carried out in two phases, the first phase followed an exploratory qualitative design. Qualitative design focused on exploring community perceived ideal qualities of persons eligible to serve in a Ward Committee. The researcher utilized focus group discussions and used semi- structured interview guide as a tool. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Themes generated from qualitative analysis were consolidated and used to develop quantitative data collection tool.

The second phase applied a quantitative approach mainly to confirm results obtained in the first phase, to understand association between variables and perceptions and to test the hypothesis. Quantitative methods and techniques had the ability to test the hypothesis whether age and gender affect the perception of grassroots communities regarding the ideal attributes of persons eligible to serve as members of a Ward Committee. A survey with the use of Likert-type scale questionnaires was used to collect data through interviews with 120 participants. Mixed methods design is beneficial as the researcher benefits from the strength of both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Maree, 2018).

3.4. Population and Sampling Procedures

3.4.1. Population of the study

According to Creswell and Creswell (2017) population is the total number of possible cases, units or elements that are included in a study. Population is also referred to as a study object which the researcher wants to conduct a study from. The study population were the grassroots community members of ward 8 of Ha-Mashau area, Collins Chabane Local Municipality. Ha-Mashau area consists of 15 210 people residing in 15 residential zones of which 6 join together to form ward 8 (StatsSA, 2019). According to (StatsSA, 2019) there are 5 885 people residing in ward 8. The researcher engaged both youth and adults for this study.

3.4.2. Sampling Procedure

O'Leary (2018) defines sampling as the process used to select a portion of the population for the study. Sampling denotes taking a subset or portion of a population for the purpose of making the research feasible, manageable and practicable (Khaldi, 2017). Purposive sampling was applied to select a sample of 57 residents within the village for the first phase of this study. Purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling in which decisions concerning the individuals to be included in the sample are taken by the researcher, based upon a variety of criteria which may include specialist knowledge of the research issue, or capacity and willingness to participate in the research (Rai & Thapa, 2015). Purposive sampling was relevant to the study based on the characteristics of the study participants which enabled the researcher to answer the research questions. The researcher engaged 8 focus group discussions in total. Each group had between 6 and 9 participants categorized by gender and age group.

In the second phase of the study, 120 participants were selected through stratified random sampling and all community members had an equal chance of inclusion in the sample to maintain data accuracy. Stratified random sampling is defined as a probability sampling technique where the researcher divides the entire population into different subgroups or strata, then randomly selects final subjects proportionally from different strata (Creswell, 2021). Stratified random sampling does not require a large sample and it guarantees better coverage of the population allowing equal participation. The technique is appropriate as it helps the researcher understand existing relationships between study groups, as to whether male and female of different age group perceive qualities of effective leaders for sustainable development in the same way. The frame of 120 participants included both youth and adults.

3.5. Data Collection Procedures

Steenkamp and Tekelas (2021) defined data collection as the process of gathering and measuring information on targeted variables in an established system which enables the researcher to answer relevant questions and evaluate outcomes.

3.5.1 Pre-testing data collection tools

Data collection tools were pre-tested prior to the actual data collection phase using a group of subjects with similar characteristics to targeted study population in order to maintain quality and reliable outcomes. Twenty participants who were also residents of Ha-Mashau village were selected for pre-testing. The process was intended to help the researcher gain new insights into the area under the study based on responses received and also strengthening of the data collection tool.

3.5.2 Data collection

Data was collected in two phases. Focus group discussions were engaged in a workshop held in the royal premises at Ha-Mashau Doli. The venue was accessible to the sampled population. A semi structured interview guide was used as a tool. Priority ranking technique with the use of Likert-type scale questionnaire was applied to confirm information from qualitative phase and to test the hypothesis whether age and gender influences the perceptions of participants in determining attributes of members of ward committees.

3.5.3 Focus group discussions (FDGs)

A focus group discussion involves gathering people from similar backgrounds or experiences together to describe and understand meanings and interpretations of a selected group of people to gain an understanding of a specific issue from the perspective of the participants of the group (Liamputtong, 2009). Focus group discussions consisted of 8 focus groups (4 youth and 4 adults) with varying numbers of participants, from 6 to 9 participants each. Within this age grouping, gender was also taken into consideration in the arrangements of participants. The groups identified qualities of persons eligible to serve in Ward Committee recording on an open-ended questionnaire. The researcher consolidated participant's responses per question. Focus group discussions have the ability to collect a large amount of data from a large number and different participants at once.

3.5.4 Priority ranking

Consolidated data from the qualitative phase was used to develop a quantitative tool. The Likert-type scale questionnaire allowed participants to rank and confirm data from the qualitative phase for an overall analysis of the study.

3.6. Data Analysis

According to Harding (2018), data analysis involves the process of inspecting, cleansing, transforming and modelling data with the goal of discovering useful information, informing conclusions and supporting decision-making using multiple approaches and diverse techniques. In this case qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis and quantitative data was analyzed using the IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.0 software. In the first phase themes were derived from obtained data per question to obtain descriptive analysis of the results. The themes revealed the most commonly perceived qualities of a leader by Ha-Mashau community. Mean and standard deviations of descriptive statistics were calculated in order to address the second objective of this study. Results were ranked and presented in a descending order of magnitude. Mann-Whitney U test & Kruscal Wallis tests were also applied as the data was nonparametric. The test was carried out to establish whether the male and female, youth vs adults had similar perceptions. Based on the objectives of the study, general results were obtained and presented in a form of texts, numbers and tables and interpreted in chapter 4.

3.7. Ethical Considerations

Prior to data collection, the researcher obtained an ethical clearance certificate from the University Research Ethics Committee, University of Venda, certificate no: SARDF/21/IRD/08/1904. A letter of approval was sent to Ha-Mashau Tribal Authority to seek permission to conduct the study in the area and it was approved orally. A community entry meeting was held with Mashau Traditional Council to introduce the project for them to be able to mobilize community members. Before the interview, participants were given a detailed explanation of what the study entailed and given a consent form to sign as agreement to participate in the study. Participants were informed that the study was

meant for academic work only and the data would be safely kept and only accessible to the researcher and supervisors. Participants' names were not disclosed, and hence, their names remained anonymous. To safeguard the participants, the researcher ensured that participants were engaged in an environmentally conducive venue.

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CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of this study. This chapter is presented in two phases. Phase 1 presents and discusses results of qualitative data collected from 57 villagers through focus group discussions (FDGs). This phase arranges and organizes data into themes and sub-themes using thematic content analysis method as previously outlined in Chapter 3. Phase 2 present and discuss quantitative data result which were collected from 120 villagers. This involved the use of descriptive statistics (for example, mean and standard deviations), figures and tables to present data. Mann-Whitney and Kruskal Wallis test were run to quantitatively examine the influence of gender, age and village on community members' perceptions on roles, personality traits, educational background, communication skills, accessibility, interest in local governance, service delivery and candidate personality. Overall, data analysis in both phases, was carried out with the following objectives in mind:

- a) To identify the community-preferred qualities of persons eligible to service in Ward Committees.
- b) To examine whether age and gender influence perceptions on qualities of members of Ward Committee; and
- c) To propose an assessment tool for use when electing members of a Ward Committee.

4.2. Results and Discussion of Qualitative Study: Phase1

4.2.1 Biographical Details of Participants

Most participants resided in Guvhungwa and Doli villages in the Ha-Mashau area. Slightly more than half of the participants who participated in focus group discussions (53 %) were females. More adults participated in the study compared to the youth. Moreover, the majority of the participants had attained secondary schooling. Given that the workshop took place on a Sunday morning, the researcher anticipated that participants would be able to take part in the discussion and achieve a balance in gender representation. Nonetheless, the result agrees with the trend that women are the ones that attend social

gatherings more than their male counterparts. This finding challenges the common notion that most organizations remain disproportionately male-dominated (Norris and Inglehart, 2013). It suggests that in associations related to community development and decision-making, women are actively involved and have a significant presence. McNulty (2015) reported, in the context of public participation in regional and municipal electoral processes, that women and men participate at mostly equal rates but women participate slightly more than men.

4.2.2. Community Perceived Roles of Ward Committee Members

This section presents findings on the roles of ward committee members. As clearly presented in table 4.1, the perceived roles of ward committee members as identified by community members were classified into four sub-themes, (1) Service delivery; (2) Information Conveyance; (3) Participation Facilitation; (4) Creating Relationships. Table 4.1 displays a more detailed picture of the various community members' perceptions per sub-theme. Participation facilitation, service delivery and information conveyance were the most popular themes. This finding is in line with the Guidelines for the Establishment and Operation of Municipal Ward Committees gazetted in June 2005 by the Department of Provincial and Local Government. According to the Guidelines, ward committees have a role to increase participation of local community, soliciting and disseminating information while also playing a key role as facilitators between the councilor and local community members (Cele, 2005). This result agrees with views expressed by Diedericks & Seitholo (2018) that foremost among the Ward Committee's tasks is to communicate and consult with the community in respect of development and service plans.

Qualitative data analysis revealed that creating relationships formed another key role of ward committee members. According to Nyawo & Mubangizi (2015) the inability of the municipality to create good relationships with other stakeholders affects service delivery. Similarly, failure by ward committee members to establish and maintain good working relationships with various stakeholders may create a recipe for disaster which in most cases, manifests in terms of poor service delivery and public apathy towards the committee's work. Therefore, it is important for ward committee members to ensure creation and sustenance of good internal and external working relationships to ensure

that the ward committee achieves the main goal of enhancing participatory democracy in local government as clearly stipulated in Municipal Structures Act (Act No. 117, 1998).

Following are some of the views that participants expressed regarding creating and sustaining internal and external relationships:

Ward committee members should report our concerns and needs to our ward councilor and they should be attended to maintain a good working relationship between the community and the ward committee. [Female Adults: Guvhungwa].

Prompting well and effective relationships with community members as a development structure [Male Youth: Doli]

4.2.3. Community Perceived ideal attributes of Ward Committee Members

Table 4.2 presents themes and sub-themes that emerged from focus group discussions (FGDs) on community members' perceived attributes of Ward Committee Members. The results showed that community's perceived attributes of ward committee members could be best grouped into five sub-themes, (1) Personality; (2) Educational Background; (3) Communication Skills; (4) Accessibility; (5) Interest on Local Governance and community building.

Educational Background emerged as the most common theme, followed by Personality, Interest on Local Governance and community building with the least being Communication skills and Accessibility. Kainuwa et al. (2013) and Harjoto et al. (2018) report that education has a positive influence on firms' corporate social performance and school performance. Modise (2017) is of the view that elected officials should possess a certain level of political education to effectively address social and governmental challenges. Below are some quotes that confirms that education is an important attribute that potential ward committee members should possess:

“Educated people can handle different situations calmly and can differentiate between wrong and right [Female Adults: Doli]”

Table 4. 1 Emerging themes and Sub-themes on roles of ward committee members

Roles of ward committee members	Youth				Adults				Tally
	Group1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6	Group 7	Group 8	
Gender	Female	Female	Male	Male	Female	Female	Male	Male	
Frequency (n)	6	7	6	6	8	9	8	7	57
Service delivery									
They serve the community in their respective wards	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		6
Ensures that the community/ward infrastructure is in good condition	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		5
Help disadvantaged and vulnerable residents to get RDP houses	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		5
They help bring employment opportunities through projects	✓			✓					2
Information Conveyance									
They are messengers who serves as a bridge between ward Councillor and the community	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		6
They submit concerns/requests from community to the Councillor	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		6
Update the community about Municipality IDP plans	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	5
Provide public information to the community	✓	✓				✓		✓	4
Refers community members to right institutions for all matters that affects and benefits the community	✓			✓	✓				3
Participation Facilitation									
They listen to needs, complaints, queries and requests from the community and attend to them	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	7
Consult with grassroots community members on potential projects in the ward		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	4
Actively attend community meetings		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	5
Creating relationship									
Resolves issues/disputes around the community	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		6
Avail themselves to the community		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	6
Establish and maintain good relationship between ward committee and the community	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	5

Table 4. 2 Emerging themes and Sub-themes on perceived attributes of ward committee members

Perceived Attributes	Youth				Adults				Tally
	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6	Group 7	Group 8	
Gender	Female	Female	Male	Male	Female	Female	Male	Male	
Frequency (n)	6	7	6	6	8	9	8	7	57
Educational Background: Have basic education, preferably at least Matriculation certificate	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	6
Personality									
a) Person of integrity: transparent, accountable, trustworthy		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	5
b) Humane Empathetic Approachable	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓	5
c) Good personality	✓	✓				✓	✓		4
d) Passionate about development	✓		✓			✓			3
e) Patient	✓			✓		✓			3
f) Having a heart for helping others			✓	✓					2
g) Displays intelligence							✓		1
h) Youthful	✓								1
Interest in local governance and community building									
a) Helpful and dedicated to community work	✓	✓	✓			✓			4
b) Understanding social challenges within communities			✓						1
Communication Skills									
A good communicator			✓			✓			2
A good listener								✓	1
Multilingual					✓				1
Accessibility									
a) A local resident						✓		✓	2
b) Active participant in civic gatherings							✓		1

“An educated leader will help community members in getting a sense of self-dependence and confidence, this way people may make their own decisions, express their views and opinions [Female youth: Guvhungwa]”

“At least someone who went to school will be able to read, write and interpret communications [Male Adults: Doli]”

Regarding the perceived attributes, youth and adult participants shared similar perspectives on some attributes. This includes the importance of leaders having a good personality, especially being transparent, accountable, trustworthy, approachable, and empathetic. These attributes were perceived to be essential for building effective relationships with grassroots community members and fostering collaboration. Personality is a significant predictor of effective leadership (Lappalainen, 2015) and plays a crucial role in enhancing the performance of businesses (Hogan & Sherman, 2020). According to Dartey-Baah (2014) personality is more important for firm performance than any other factor except the industry sector in which the firm competes. Lappalainen (2015) showed that personality was one of the significant predictors to effective leadership. According to Hogan & Sherman (2020) personality is more important for firm performance than any other factor except the industry sector in which the firm competes.

The analysis also revealed that communication skills constituted some of the attributes that community members perceived ward committee members must possess before they can be given the mandate to serve and represent the people. Communication skills involve a whole array of skills ranging from the ability to speak, listen, talk, writing and being multilingual. Both youth and adults recognized the importance of leaders who exhibited good communication and listening skills. However, adults placed a greater emphasis on leaders being multilingual. Diverse cultural and linguistic landscape of the Ha-Mashau area might have influenced their views. This implies that the ability to effectively communicate and understand the perspectives of community members in their own language is a valuable attribute for building trust and fostering inclusivity. According to Manley & Titchen (2017) communication skills are part of the success equation of effective leadership. Communication skills such as facilitation skills are a key ingredient to building an effective bridge between Councillors and local community members.

Consequently, ward committee members must possess good listening, speaking and multilingual skills.

When examining accessibility, youth and adults agreed on the importance of having leaders who resided in the village. This shared expectation for leaders could have been influenced by the need for leaders with deep understanding of the local context and are familiar with the specific challenges and needs of their communities. The youth also emphasized the importance of leaders who actively participated in civic gatherings. It was clear that the youth valued leaders who actively engaged with their communities, participated in local meetings and events and involved themselves in local decision-making processes. This observation find is supported by Weiskittel (1999) who argues that leaders should be able to coach, teach and instil trust in their followers. In this respect, accessibility of the leader is a fundamental requirement.

Both youth and adults expressed similar perspectives with respect to interest in local governance and community building. For both age groups, ideal leaders were those who were helpful, dedicated to community work and understood social challenges within the community. This reflects a shared expectation for leaders who are genuinely committed to addressing the needs and concerns of their communities. According to Shields & Hesbol (2020) effective leaders are often those interested in and committed to addressing the needs of their communities, in addition to building relationships with individuals from diverse backgrounds.

4.2.4. Reasons/ Motivation for perceived attributes

Participants were also asked to provide reasons to support their perceptions regarding the attributes they shared that ward committee members should be in possession before they can be members of ward committee. Table 4.3 provides a detailed description of some of the reasons/motivations provided by community members.

The findings revealed that the participants opted for ward committee members who are trustworthy because they believed that trustworthy leaders are accountable and they take responsibility. A study to investigate the relationship between accountability and trust showed that the two were positively correlated (Thoms *et al.*, 2002). Therefore,

community members' views and expectations are consistent with what the research community has already established.

The findings also revealed that community members preferred ward committee members who are humane, that is, a leader who listens, creates time and platforms for sharing community ideas. Participants revealed that the humanity in ward committee member must make her/him accessible and readily available to the community they serve. Several researches have been carried out around the issue of humane leadership as an analogy of servant leadership (Dimitrov, 2015; Winston & Ryan ,2008).

Table 4. 3 Emerging themes and Sub-themes on reasons for perceived attributes of ward committee members

Perceived Attributes	Motivation for the perception	Youth				Adults				Tally
		Group1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6	Group 7	Group 8	
	Gender	Female	Female	Male	Male	Female	Female	Male	Male	
	Frequency (n)	6	7	6	6	8	9	8	7	57
Personality										
Trustworthy	Clear and frequent communication motivate people to participate, support local cause and accept change		✓							1
	People raise their opinions and ideas to someone they trust and also remove tensions and divisions within the community					✓				1
	Openness and accountability promote trust and teamwork in achieving same goal						✓			1
	A trustworthy leader is accountable and always take responsibility								✓	1
Humanity	A leader with humility is also a good listener who will create time and platforms for community ideas			✓						1
	A member with humility will always be accessible and available for community he/she serve				✓					1
	A good heart enables one to work with people from different social groups or class					✓				1
	A leader who cares for his/her community always strives to meet their needs								✓	1
Good personality	One's representation gives a community assurance and trust to a person	✓								1

Perceived Attributes	Motivation for the perception	Youth				Adults				Tally
		Group1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6	Group 7	Group 8	
	Gender	Female	Female	Male	Male	Female	Female	Male	Male	
	Personality allows one to stand apart from others and enables ones' view and thoughts to gain trust and respect from others		✓							1
	Good personality links to good working relationship with other stakeholders enabling openness and effective communication						✓			1
	Influence good behaviour in a wider community to a level where they can make informed decisions							✓		1
Passionate	A person with best interest of the community at heart will take initiative for change	✓					✓			2
	A leader with passion has the ability to empower community members to create the change they want to see	✓								1
Patience	A person who will be able to listen to and assist any community members regardless the of approach	✓								1
	A patient leader can have a good working relationship with different characters				✓					1
	Community development it's a process that need patience as it takes time for one to see changes						✓			1
Transparen cy	A transparent leader keeps community members updated on any matter concerning their community			✓						1
A heart for helping others	A member who is passionate for community development is always available and accessible to the community he/she serves				✓					1
	Making time to help others empowers them to participate in their own development			✓						1
Approacha ble	An approachable leader makes it easy for residents to raise any matter that might build or affect the community to them	✓								1

Perceived Attributes	Motivation for the perception	Youth				Adults				Tally
		Group1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6	Group 7	Group 8	
	Gender	Female	Female	Male	Male	Female	Female	Male	Male	
Accountable	A responsible leader is able to inspect their achievements and failures and understand why things happened the way they happened							✓		1
Intelligent	An intelligent person is able to sense how others feel and maintain trust, relationships and networks with other stakeholders							✓		1
Empathy	Community members find it easy to approach leaders who are compassionate and accommodative								✓	1
Young	Youth are still active and have sound minds to make informed decisions in the community	✓								1
Educational Background										
Basic Education	A member with basic education has an active mind and knows different approaches to tackle community issues	✓								1
	A Ward committee member is expected to answer all queries directed to them by community members		✓							1
	An educated leader will empower community members to gain self-dependence, confidence to express their views and opinions				✓					1
	An educated member should be able to handle different situations calmly and can see between right and wrong						✓			1
	To have an effective communication a community representative should be able to read, write and interpret communication							✓		1
Grade 12	An educated person will be able to lead the community to the right direction								✓	1
Communication Skills										
A good communicator	A good communicator can build good relationship with different stakeholders who can bring change to community			✓						1
	An effective communicator enhances participation and better outcomes in any initiative						✓			1

Perceived Attributes	Motivation for the perception	Youth				Adults				Tally
		Group1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6	Group 7	Group 8	
	Gender	Female	Female	Male	Male	Female	Female	Male	Male	
A good listener	A leader should listen to what the community says so he/she don't miss out on important issues in the community								✓	1
Multilingual	A multilingual leader will be able to create good networks that can help bring change in the community					✓				1
Accessibility										
A local	People have faith in leaders they have access to any time of their need						✓			1
Active participant in civic gatherings	A participant in community meetings is well updated on their community matters							✓		1
Interest on local governance and community building										
Helpful and dedicated to community work	An active member will be able to link community and resources that are needed to improve the well-being of the community		✓							1
Understanding social challenges within communities	A member should be able to borrow from other communities			✓						1

4.2.5 Confirmation for perceived attributes and arguments

Two sub-themes were identified under community members' confirmation for perceived attributes and arguments, namely service delivery and candidate personality. Table 4.4 presents 2 sub-themes identified.

In the context of service delivery, participants revealed that they expected ward committee members in-service to be able to help vulnerable groups meet their basic needs through facilitating the provision of RDP houses and food parcels to local members. Participants further revealed that members in action must act on the promises they make prior to election into ward committees while ensuring inclusivity when implementing community projects.

In terms of candidate personality, participants revealed that personality was the most important factor when determining the ability of nominated members to competently, effectively and efficiently carry out the responsibilities given to them. Participants also revealed that candidate personality also meant that they elect members who can be trusted as leaders, that is, leaders who can play an advocacy role to the community.

Table 4. 4 Emerging themes and sub-themes on confirmation for perceived attributes of ward committee members

Yes/No	Youth				Adults				Tally
	Group1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6	Group 7	Group 8	
Gender	Female	Female	Male	Male	Female	Female	Male	Male	
Frequency (n)	6	7	6	6	8	9	8	7	57
Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	8
Why?									
Service Delivery									
Ward Committee members in service are able to help vulnerable group meet their basic needs through provision of RDP houses and food parcels	✓			✓			✓		3
Members in service put action into their promise			✓			✓			2
Community projects are inclusive in terms of employees			✓						1
Candidate personality									
Community members elect people they can trust as leaders		✓	✓					✓	3
Personality is the most important factor when determining one's ability in carrying out responsibilities		✓		✓				✓	3
We elect people who can be advocates for the community		✓					✓		2
We check their ability in carrying out their responsibilities					✓				1

4.2.6 Conclusion

The purpose of this section was to present and discuss qualitative research findings for Phase 1 of this study. Opinions and views were solicited from 57 community members regarding what they thought were to be the roles of ward committee members when they were elected into ward committees as well as the attributes of the members that would gain their approvals as the chief custodians of their local communities. Qualitative results revealed 4 sub-themes on the perceived roles, namely service delivery, information conveyance, participation/facilitation and creating relationship and five sub-themes on ideal attributes namely personality, educational background, communication skills, accessibility and interest in local governance (ILG). There were inter-age group similarities and differences in the perceived attributes of ideal grassroots communities. Youth prioritized qualities such as passion, heart for helping others and active community engagement. On the other hand, adults highlighted intelligence, patience and multilingualism as crucial attributes that leaders should exhibit. The differences may have emanated from the unique perspectives and experiences of each age group. Male and female respondents also shared similar perspectives on many attributes. These results provide valuable insights for understanding the expectations and preferences of different age and gender groups with respect to grassroots leadership for sustainable rural development.

As the study followed a sequential mixed method design, the study consisted of two phases. Members of the community of Ha-Mashau were asked to identify ideal attributes of ward committee members for sustainable rural development in phase 1. The knowledge and information gathered from Phase 1 was then used to develop a research tool which was used to gather data for Phase 2 of this study. Participants were also asked to confirm the data obtained from phase 1 through a likert-type scale questionnaire.

4.3 Quantitative Results and Discussion: Phase 2

This section presents the study's findings from the quantitative data analysis. In particular, the quantitative results include findings on community perceptions on ideal attributes of ward committee members and on the roles of ward committee members. Again, this section also presents and discuss the level of association between participants perceptions and independent variables such as age, gender and village.

4.3.1 Socio-Demographic Variables for Survey Participants

Table 4.5 presents summary results for the distribution of survey participants by village, gender, age group and highest level of education.

Table 4. 5 Distribution of participants by village, gender, age group and highest level of qualification

Variable	Responses	Percentage
Village	Mariadze	25.8
	Doli	35.0
	Guvhungwa	39.2
	Total	100.0
Gender	Male	53.3
	Female	46.7
	Total	100.0
Age group	Youth	58.3
	Adult	41.7
	Total	100.0
Highest level of qualification	Undergraduate degree	12.5
	Diploma	20.8
	Matric	35.0
	High school with no matric	20.8
	Primary	10.8
	Total	100.0

Table 4.5 shows that all three villages were fairly represented with more participants residing in Guvhungwa village 39%. Regarding gender distribution, Male participated slightly more than their female counterparts 53%. Youth participated more than adults (58%) and most participants had attained secondary education. Based on the participants distribution, males participated slightly more in number than female participants and this

could be due to societal norms, that women are expected to care for children and other family members which can limit their participation in event such as this one. the participation by youth of Ha-Mashau show that they are more than willing to build a sustainable future for their community. Thus, they should be involved in any sustainable development initiative. Francis *et al.* (2011) indicated that most youth challenges can bridge the gap between youth and society in general if they are properly attended to through appropriate development programming.

4.3.2 Community Perceived Roles of Ward Committee members

The table 4.6 present mean and standard deviations for proxy items used by this study to solicit community members' perceptions on the roles of ward committee members. Again, the tabulated results also show the extent to which any of these items were (statistically) significant or non-significant associated with independent variables such as gender, age group and village.

Table 4. 6 Means, standard deviations for role related perception items and the level of significance of their associations with independent participants' variables

Roles	Mean	SD	Significance of association		
			Gender	Age group	Village group
1. Solicit and disseminate useful information to their communities	4.8	4.66	ns	*	Ns
2. Make recommendations on any matter affecting the ward to the Ward Councilor or the local Municipal Council	4.5	0.55	ns	Ns	Ns
3. Promote and facilitate public participation in the process of development	4.5	0.52	ns	Ns	Ns
4. Create unbiased communication channels and co-operative partnership between Municipality and community within a ward	4.4	0.58	ns	Ns	Ns

5. Build and maintain relationships with all stakeholders in the ward	4.4	0.52	ns	Ns	Ns
6. Facilitate service delivery to the communities they serve	4.4	0.56	ns	Ns	Ns

Key: ns = not statistically significant * = $p < 0.05$

Table 4.6 shows the community-perceived roles of Ward Committee members in descending order of magnitude. The two top-most popular roles were “solicit and disseminate useful information to their communities” and “make recommendations on any matter affecting the ward to the ward councilor or local Municipal council”. For all the perceived roles, gender, age group and village had no statistically significant influence on them. However, adult respondents agreed more than their youthful counterparts with respect to the perception, “solicit and disseminate useful information to communities” (Mann-Whitney $U = 1407.50$, $Z = -2.064$, $p < 0.05$). The result shows that community members are well aware of the responsibilities of ward committee members. And also, the elders in the community have full trust that the committee can be effective in advocating for and linking the community to the municipality. This view is supported by Silima & Auriacombe (2013) indicating that the specific function of ward committees is not only to act as a mechanism to promote public participation but also to build the capacity of residents and help councillors and municipal officials to engage in participatory processes.

4.3.3 Community-perceived personality traits/characteristics of Ward Committee members

Table 4.7 present means and standard deviations for personality trait items as well as the level of association with independent variables namely, gender, age group and village.

Table 4. 7 Means, standard deviations for personality traits related perception items and the level of significance of their associations with independent participants' variables

Personality traits	Mean	SD	Significance of association		
			Gender	Age group	Village
1. Ability to work in harmony with a wide range of people (including youth, women, people with disabilities and other marginalized groups) and organizations within and outside the community	4.7	0.47	ns	Ns	Ns
2. Passionate about development work	4.7	0.45	ns	Ns	Ns
3. Trustworthy and no record of corrupt practices	4.6	0.47	ns	Ns	Ns
4. Shows empathy (ability to understand and share the feelings of others)	4.6	4.58	ns	*	Ns
5. Approachable	4.6	0.49	ns	Ns	Ns
6. Loves and respects people (Humane) and thus has a likeable personality	4.5	0.51	ns	*	Ns
7. Not bossy and regards himself or herself as a servant of the people	4.5	0.60	ns	Ns	Ns
8. Knowledgeable about how government works, in particular local government	4.5	0.50	ns	Ns	Ns
9. Understands the roles and responsibilities of Ward Committees and legislations governing their operations	4.5	0.50	ns	Ns	Ns
10. Often demonstrates patience even when things do not seem to work	4.4	0.52	ns	Ns	Ns
11. Has a heart for helping others (loves helping others)	4.3	0.49	*	Ns	Ns

12. Preferably young	3.9	0.89	*	Ns	Ns
13. Preferably a female	3.5	1.10	***	**	Ns

Key: ns = not statistically significant * = $p < 0.05$

The results in table 4.7 shows that the mean scores for almost all the attributes are above 4, indicating that ward committee members are generally perceived to have high levels of these attributes. The SD scores are relatively low, indicating that the scores are clustered around the mean. There is no significant association between any of the perceived personality attributes and the village of participants. This suggests that the community of Ha-Mashau shares similar perceptions regarding the qualities of the ideal ward committee member regardless of the village in which they reside at. A significant association exists between the perceived attribute “shows empathy” and the age group (Mann-Whitney U = 1347, Z = -2.509, $p < 0.05$). Adults perceived ward committee members to be more empathetic than the youth. This could be because older people are more likely to have been raised in a more diverse society and to have been exposed to a wider range of people and experiences. There is a significant association between three perceived attributes “loves and respects people (Mann-Whitney U = 1367.50, Z = -2.371, $p < 0.05$), has a heart for helping others (Mann-Whitney U = 1432, Z = -2.258, $p < 0.05$), preferably a female (Mann-Whitney U = 881, Z = -5.037, $p < 0.05$)” and the gender variable. Female participants perceived Ward committee members to have higher levels of the mentioned attributes than their male counterparts. This might be the case because the female stereotypes often associate women with being caring and compassionate.

4.3.4. Educational background

Table 4.8 presents mean and standard deviations summarizing respondents’ responses regarding their perceptions on educational background of ward committee members. The table further shows the test for association results between educational background related variables and the independent variables such as gender, age group and village.

Table 4. 8 Means, Standard Deviations for educational background related perception items and the level of significance of their associations with independent participants' variables

Educational Background	Mean	SD	Significance of association		
			Gender	Age group	Village group
1. Has tertiary education (Diploma to degree)	4.1	0.65	ns	*	Ns
2. Has Grade 12	4.1	0.59	*	Ns	Ns
3. Has basic education (at least attended primary or secondary education but did not complete grade 12)	3.3	1.05	ns	Ns	Ns

Key: ns = not statistically significant * = $p < 0.05$

Table 4.8 shows that there is a significant association between perceived educational background and age group and gender particularly with “tertiary education” (Mann-Whitney $U = 1423.50$, $Z = -2.047$, $p < 0.05$) (Mann-Whitney $U = 1463.50$, $Z = -2.211$, $p < 0.05$). The youth of Ha-Mashau require a Ward Committee member to have tertiary education whereas the female adults require a Ward Committee member to at least have passed matric. This could be because younger people are more likely to have had the opportunity to attend university or college and the elders are more concerned about the experiences that one has in the community. There is no significant association between educational background traits and village. This suggests that community members perceive similar levels of education for ward committee members regardless of the village they came from. This reflects unity and common values shared within the larger community which is crucial for effective local governance. Modise (2017) argued that its ideal for elected officials to have a certain level of political education to equip them with knowledge and interest to deal with social and governmental challenges.

4.3.5 Communication skills

Table 4.9 presents results summarizing participants' responses to several communications-related perception items. The table presents the means, standard

deviations and the level with which each perception item is associated with independent variables such as gender, age group and village.

Table 4. 9 Means, standard deviations for communication skills perception items and the level of significance of their associations with independent participants' variables

Communication	Mean	SD	Significance of association		
			Gender	Age group	Village
1. Listens well and only responds or comment after understanding fully	4.6	3.74	*	*	Ns
2. Speaks well to public audience	4.5	0.49	Ns	*	Ns
3. Facilitates engagements involving many stakeholders such that participants understand what is deliberated on and feel respected or included in decision making	4.5	0.55	Ns	*	Ns
4. Can write reports that are informative or rich in facts	4.2	0.45	*	*	Ns
5. Multilingual (understands and speaks many languages)	4.2	0.58	Ns	***	Ns

Key: ns = not statistically significant * = $P < 0.05$

Table 4.9 above summarizes participants' responses to communication skills-related perception items that community members require ward committee members to possess before they can be considered for ward committee membership. Ward committee members are generally perceived to be good listeners, public speakers, facilitators, and writers.

A significant association was found between two communication attributes: (listens well and only responds after understanding fully , can write reports that are informative or rich in facts) and the gender variable. females agreed more than their male counterparts, that is listening and writing skills matter more to female community members than their male counterparts. A significant association was also found between all communication attributes and the age group variable. Youth agreed more than adults on the top four

perceived qualities “listens well”(Mann-Whitney U = 1241, Z = -3.248, p < 0.05); “speaks well to the public” (Mann-Whitney U = 1385.00, Z = -2.259, p < 0.05); “facilitates engagements and write informative reports”(Mann-Whitney U = 1210.50, Z = -3.316, p < 0.05) except for “multilingual” (Mann-Whitney U = 1051, Z = -4.420, p < 0.05) where adults agreed more than the youth. Communication skills are crucial to both youth and adults of the Ha-Mashau community, however, the youth does not see being multilingual as a key factor for effective communication. This might be because the adult population realizes their weaknesses when it comes to effective communication skills, hence, they view communication as a key skill that must be possessed by ward committee members. Understanding these variations can inform the selection of committee members with the appropriate communication skillsets to effectively serve the diverse needs of the community. According to Tate (2003), communication skills, particularly listening skills are important for building trust and establishing relationships, keeping up with what is going on in the organization as well as making decisions. The invaluable importance of other communication skills such as facilitation skills especially in the context of effective leadership is well documented (Manley & Titchen, 2017; Paulsen, 2004; Dartey-Baah, 2014).

4.3.6 Accessibility

Table 4.10 presents summary results on respondents' perceptions on accessibility related proxy items. Descriptive results for two items are presented as well as their level of significance of association to independent participant variables.

Table 4. 10 Descriptive results for access related perception items and the level of significance of their associations with independent participants' variables

Access	Mean	SD	Significance of association		
			Gender	Age group	Village
1. Actively participates in civic/community gatherings and other community events	4.7	0.51	Ns	Ns	Ns
2. A local person who stays in the Ward	4.7	0.51	*	Ns	Ns

Key: ns = not statistically significant

* = P < 0.05

Table 4.10 shows statistical results summarizing perceptions of survey participants on accessibility of a ward committee member to the community. Overall, survey participants “strongly agreed” with the view that ward committee members must be people who stay in their local wards, and they must be people who actively participate in civic/community gatherings. There was no statistically significant association observed between the two perceived attributes and independent variables ‘age group and village’. A significant association was found between the perceived attribute of a person who stays in the ward (Mann-Whitney U = 1396, Z = -2.682, p < 0.05) and the gender variable. Male participants strongly believe that a ward committee member should be a local person. This could be because traditional gender roles often associate men with being more territorial and rooted in their communities. Furthermore, Bénit-Gbaffou & Katsaura (2014) stated that a leader should possess the ability to coach, teach, and produce trust in followers and that, as a teacher and coach, a leader must be accessible.

4.3.7 Interest and involvement in local governance and community building work

Table 4.11 present descriptive results in the form of mean scores and standard deviations. Survey participants were asked to respond to six (6) interests in local governance (ILG) related perception items.

Table 4. 11 Descriptive results for ILG related proxy variables and the significance of their association with independent gender, age and village variables

Interest in local governance	Mean	SD	Significance of association		
			Gender	Age group	Village
1. Dedicated to community development work	4.7	0.42	ns	*	Ns
2. Has an in-depth understanding of community issues complex	4.7	0.45	ns	Ns	Ns
3. Involves community in decision making	4.6	0.46	ns	Ns	Ns
4. Has foresight or vision that resonates with local community aspirations	4.5	0.49	ns	Ns	Ns
5. Relies on objective assessment situation before making decisions	4.5	0.61	ns	Ns	Ns

6. Conceptualization	4.5	0.59	ns	Ns	Ns
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Key: ns = not statistically significant * = $P < 0.05$

Table 4.11 summarizes the findings, which explore the association between six perceived Interest in Local Governance (ILG) attributes and demographic characteristics of survey participants. The analysis revealed a strong consensus among participants. Overall, survey responses indicated a high level of agreement (mean scores of at least 4.5 on a likely 1-5 scale with all six ILG attributes. This aligns with existing research by Attah et al. (2017) highlighting the importance of effective leadership and member qualities for successful local governance. Interestingly, there were no significant differences in perceptions found based on village, gender and age groups. This suggests a consensus within ward 8 of Ha-Mashau community regarding the desired qualities of Ward Committee members and it reflect shared community values.

However, one noteworthy exception emerged. A significant association was found between age group and the perceived attribute "dedication to community development work". Adults placed a higher value on the attribute compared to younger participants. This could mean that adults might desire leaders who can guide and inspire them through the community development process and this highlights a potential need for community education initiatives. Marumo (2019) wrote that it is the duty of ward committee members to consult with the members of the community and inquire about and research the aspirations, needs, and interests of the local community in order to make an informed decision for the community.

4.3.8. Respondents beliefs on election of ward committee members

Survey respondents were also asked to give their views regarding the extent to which they believed community members elected ward committees based on the criteria of service delivery and candidate personality. Consequently, survey respondents were asked to rank 5 proxy questions on service delivery and 7 proxy questions on candidate personality. The results are presented in table 4.12 and 4.13 below.

4.3.8.1 Service Delivery

Table 4.12 a summary of responses for 5 key service delivery areas is presented. Descriptive results and the extent to which independent variables influence the perceptions of survey participants on these 5 key service delivery proxy questions.

Table 4. 12 Descriptive results for service delivery related perception items and their level of association with independent participants' variables

Service Delivery	Mean	SD	Significance of association		
			Gender	Age group	Village
1. Implementation of projects is intended to improve people's lives in the ward	3.7	0.71	ns	Ns	Ns
2. Ward Committee members are competent in serving and helping vulnerable groups to meet their basic needs	3.6	0.87	ns	Ns	Ns
3. Community projects are inclusive in terms of allocation of jobs or employment	3.5	0.99	ns	Ns	Ns
4. Communities within the ward receive thorough feedback on matters raised within the Municipal Council through the Ward Councilor	3.5	0.94	ns	Ns	Ns
5. Ward Committee members act and deliver on their promises	3.4	1.00	ns	Ns	Ns

Key: ns = not statistically significant * = $P < 0.05$

Table 4.12 sheds light on community perceptions regarding services expected from Ward Committee members. The table shows a trend of agreement (mean scores between 3.5 and 4.0) with the first four listed services. Among these, "Implementation of projects to improve lives" (mean = 3.7) and "Competency in serving vulnerable groups" (mean = 3.6) emerged as the top priorities. These findings align with the core functions of Ward Committees, which involve addressing community needs and promoting development (Cele,2005)

The perception regarding “acting on promises” presented a more uncertain picture (mean = 3.4). This suggests residents might not be entirely convinced that Ward Committees consistently deliver on their commitments. The study also employed the Kruskal-Wallis test to examine potential differences in perceptions based on gender, age, and village. The statistically insignificant results suggest a remarkable degree of consensus across these variables. This finding is particularly noteworthy. It implies that these service delivery expectations are not inherently divisive but rather represent common ground within the community. Mbigi & Maree (1995) emphasize the importance of unity and community strength as cornerstones of harmony and nation-building, ultimately fostering sustainable development. The findings align with this perspective, highlighting a potential strength for local governance initiatives. Government and development partners can leverage this sense of community unity to advance development efforts.

4.3.8.2. Candidate Personality

In this section, statistical results summarizing survey participants’ responses on 7 candidate personality proxy items are presented. Table 4.13 shows mean candidate personality item scores and their standard deviations as well as their level of association with independent variables such as gender, age group and village.

Table 4. 13 Descriptive results for personality related perception items and the level of significance of their associations with independent participants’ variables

Personality	Mean	SD	Significance of association		
			Gender	Age group	Village
1. Excellent communication is important for a Ward Committee member to be effective	4.7	3.47	ns	***	Ns
2. Ability to mobilize various resources is crucial when we elect Ward Committee members	4.2	0.54	*	***	Ns
3. Individuals who are able to network and can work with many stakeholders	4.2	0.46	**	**	Ns
4. We elect people who can be advocates for the community	4.2	0.56	***	***	Ns

5. People who are trusted to be mobilizing agents for community action	4.2	0.53	***	***	Ns
6. Community members elect people they trust and believe are servant leaders	4.1	0.62	*	**	Ns
7. Personality is the most important factor when determining a candidate's ability to carry out roles and responsibilities of the Ward Committee	4.1	0.76	ns	***	Ns

key: ns = not statistically significant * = $P < 0.05$

Table 4.13 presents personality traits attributes that the community consider crucial for Ward Committee members. A strong consensus emerged regarding all listed traits, except "excellent communication". This attribute received the highest mean score (4.7) and standard deviation (3.47), highlighting its perceived importance for effective communication with the community. While village of origin did not influence perceptions. However, statistically significant differences were observed in gender and age variables. Female participants placed a higher value on the ability to mobilize resources, network with stakeholders, advocate for the community, and be trusted mobilizing agents. This suggests that women might be perceived as more adept at these skills, potentially due to sociological factors or community expectations.

The results also revealed contrasting views between youth and adult participants. Youth consistently rated all listed traits (except communication and advocacy) as more important than adults. Conversely, adults placed a higher emphasis on communication and advocacy. These findings could be attributed to generational differences in priorities or perceptions of leadership qualities. The observed gender and age variations highlight the importance of considering these demographics when selecting Ward Committee members. Fostering a diverse committee with a range of skills and perspectives, Ward Committees can potentially enhance their effectiveness in serving the community.

4.3.9 Conclusion

The purpose of phase 2 of this study was to examine the association between perceived attributes and the roles of ward committee member and the participants independent variables which are gender, age group and village. And also, to confirm the hypothesis. Descriptive statistics, Mann-Witney & Kruskal Wallis test were used as methods of investigation. The result indicated that indeed age and gender influenced participants perceptions on the inspired roles and attributes of ward committee members. On the roles of ward committees, gender, and village had no statistically significant association for all perception items on roles of ward committee members. The age group variable influenced the perception to solicit and disseminate useful information to their communities.

With regard to perceived attributes, there was a significant association between almost all the perceived attributes of ward committee members and the age group variable with the exception of accessibility. For example, in the personality trait, Younger participants perceive ward committee members as more empathetic than their older counterparts. This may indicate a generational shift in values and expectations. There was also a significant association between the perceived attributes and gender variable except for the interest in local governance. For example, in the communication skills attribute, female participants emphasized the importance of listening and writing skills more than males. This finding reflects different communication preferences or expectations between genders. The findings not only provide insights into local governance but also raise important questions about generational differences, gender dynamics, and the need for inclusivity and diversity in decision-making bodies.

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CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

The previous chapter presented and discussed the results of this study. The present chapter is organized into 3 sections namely, conclusions, recommendations, and limitations of the study. The conclusion of this study is based on the investigation that was carried out to study and understand community members' perceptions regarding what they viewed as qualifying factors to be possessed by every aspiring ward committee member to guarantee their success in leading, serving and representing the people for sustainable rural development.

5.1.1 Socio-demographic Characteristics

The findings of this study showed most of the participants resided at Guvhungwa village. Majority of participants were males with 53% while 47% were females, hence both genders were almost equally represented. Nonetheless, male participated more than females in this study. Most of the participants had high school background. However, matric holders were a bit higher with 35%. Concerning age group, majority participants were youths (58%) while adults were at (42%).

5.1.2 Influence of Gender, Age and Village on Community Members' Perceptions of Roles of Ward Committee Members

The findings of this study showed that community members had consensus on perceived roles of ward committee members as evidenced by lack of statistically significant association between role perception items and gender, age group and village. However, this was in exception to the role of soliciting and disseminating information where the youth and adult respondents had different perceptions. In particular, adult respondents believed more than the youth that information soliciting and dissemination was one of the key roles of ward committee leaders.

5.1.3 Influence of Gender, Age and Village on Community Members' Perceptions of Personality traits of Ward Committee Members

The findings of the study showed that gender influenced the perceptions of survey participants regarding their expectations for potential ward committee members to

possess certain personality traits, for example, traits such as “showing empathy”; “love and respect for people”, and “preference for female leaders”. Specifically, the findings showed that in cases where the youth “agreed”, their adult counterparts “strongly agreed” (for example, on “love and respect for people” and “showing empathy”). Similarly, in cases where the youth were “uncertain”, their adult counterparts “agreed” (for example, “being female”).

Further, the findings of this study revealed that male and female community members had different perceptions with regards to the need for ward committee members to have a heart for helping others, preference for young leaders and preference for female leaders. Except for preference for female members where males were uncertain while females agreed, females were in more agreement compared to their male counterparts, that is, the mean response rates for females were generally higher than those for male participants.

5.1.4 Influence of Gender, Age and Village on Community Members’ Perceptions around Education Background of Ward Committee Members

The findings of this study revealed that community members expected ward committee members to possess at least a matric qualification. The findings showed that participants were uncertain (neither agree nor disagree) about their perception towards electing ward committee members with just a basic education. The findings of this study revealed that age group variable influenced community members' perceptions toward the need for ward committee members to possess tertiary education. Similarly, gender was shown to influence the perception about the need to possess grade 12 prior to be considered for ward committee membership position.

5.1.5 Influence of Gender, Age and Village on Community Members’ Perceptions around Interests in Local Governance Issues of Ward Committee Members

The findings revealed that the influence of gender, age group and village was statistically insignificant for almost all ILG related perception items, however, with an exception of the association between age group and the item “dedicated to community development work” which turned out to be statistically significant. The finding revealed that adults agreed more than their youthful counterparts in their responses to the ILG proxy questions.

5.2. Conclusion

Few studies have been conducted in relation to Ward Committees. However, most scholars place their emphasis on the performance of ward committees than their representation structure and their abilities. This study fills the gap by identifying community-perceived ideal attributes for a person eligible to mobilize and lead the drive for rural sustainable development. Exploring the influence of age and gender on community members' perceptions of ward committee members' qualities was also essential for understanding the dynamics that shape local governance structures. This study found that attributes such as a strong personality, fair educational background, strong communication skills, accessibility, genuine interest, and commitment to Local Governance and community development are significant traits that a Ward Committee member should possess to enable sustainable development. Leaders with these embodying qualities can play a pivotal role in fostering community engagement, empowering residents, and addressing local challenges.

The study's results revealed that age and gender played a significant role in influencing participants' perceptions in almost all of the five perceived attributes except the accessibility of a ward committee member to the community and interest in local government. These findings reject the null hypothesis that age and gender does not influence perceptions of community members on the ideal qualities of Ward Committee members. The study has contributed to the existing literature on grassroots community leadership, providing valuable insights for the selection and development of Ward Committee members, ultimately fostering sustainable rural development in Ha-Mashau and similar communities. The results of this study are of critical significance to the government, organizations, and other stakeholders in South Africa with an interest in mobilization for rural sustainable development. The findings from this study have implications in the field of local governance and rural development. This study contributes to the understanding of how community member demographics influence perceptions of ideal ward committee members. By addressing these diverse expectations, local governance can be strengthened to be more inclusive and effective in promoting sustainable rural development.

5.3. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. It is recommended that intervention programmes be designed, planned and implemented to ensure that all community group members are made aware of the importance of objectivity when electing community leaders to ensure that people who truly want to serve and represent people are given the chance to serve and represent the people. This recommendation is made with reference to the statistically significant influence of gender on people's preference for women leaders.
2. The findings of this study revealed areas of common interests for people in communities and societies. In particular, areas around roles of ward committee leaders, service delivery, local governance issues have been shown to have statistically non-significant association when related with independent variables such as gender, age and village. The researcher therefore recommends that these constitute areas that local, district, provincial and national governments can use to rally people towards implementing inclusive growth initiatives to improve the knowledge capacity of ward committee members.
3. It is also recommended that this study be repeated on a large scale for validation and improvement of present research findings. Presented research findings are drawn on a sample size of 120 individuals. Consequently, the small sample size may have caused associations between dependent variables such as roles, service delivery etc and the independent gender, age group and village variables statistically significant.
4. It is recommended that Policymakers and practitioners consider the importance of the identified attributes and their contribution to sustainable development when implementing programmes aiming to enhance leadership capacity.

5.4. Limitations and Further Study

The present study mainly focused on investigating the Attributes of Ideal Grassroots Community Leaders for Sustainable Rural Development: The Case of Ward Committees in Vhembe District Municipality of South Africa. As such, findings of this study cannot be

fully generalized due to limitations arising from the study settings. It is important to consider the fact that the perceived Attributes of ward committee members may vary depending on the specific needs of the community.

The second limitation is that the study didn't cover several independent variables that might have an influence on people's perceptions about roles, personality traits, service delivery etc. Such variables may include education level, socio-economic status (SES), and employment status.

5.5. Summary

The study explored the ideal qualities of leadership for sustainable rural development with a special attention to ward committees. The study discovered that community members value strong personalities, knowledge, communication, accessibility, and commitment to local development in their leaders. Age and gender influenced the perceptions of community members in some attributes. Based on these findings, the researcher recommends programs to educate communities and improve leadership training programs. It also acknowledges the constraints of the sample size and the focus on a specific area.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Ethics Certificate

ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

NAME OF RESEARCHER/INVESTIGATOR:

Ms AJ Nemathithi

STUDENT NO:

14014455

PROJECT TITLE: **Attributes of Ideal Grassroots Community Leaders for Sustainable Rural Development: The Case of Ward Committees in Vhembe District Municipality of South Africa.**

ETHICAL CLEARANCE NO: SARDF/21/IRD/08/1904

SUPERVISORS/ CO-RESEARCHERS/ CO-INVESTIGATORS

NAME	INSTITUTION & DEPARTMENT	ROLE
Prof J Francis	University of Venda	Supervisor
Dr LR Kane	University of Venda	Co - Supervisor
Dr P Lavhelani	University of Venda	Co - Supervisor
Ms AJ Nemathithi	University of Venda	Investigator - Student

Type: **Masters Research**

Risk: **Minimal risk to humans, animals or environment (Category 2)**

Approval Period: **April 2021 – April 2023**

The Research Ethics Social Sciences Committee (RESSC) hereby approves your project as indicated above.

General Conditions

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, please note the following:

- The project leader (principal investigator) must report in the prescribed format to the REC:
 - Annually (or as otherwise requested) on the progress of the project, and upon completion of the project
 - Within 48hrs in case of any adverse event (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the project.
 - Annually a number of projects may be randomly selected for an external audit.
- The approval applies strictly to the protocol as stipulated in the application form. Would any changes to the protocol be deemed necessary during the course of the project, the project leader must apply for approval of these changes at the REC. Would there be deviation from the project protocol without the necessary approval of such changes, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
- The date of approval indicates the first date that the project may be started. Would the project have to continue after the expiry date; a new application must be made to the REC and new approval received before or on the expiry date.
- In the interest of ethical responsibility, the REC retains the right to:
 - Request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the project.
 - To ask further questions; Seek additional information; Require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process.
 - withdraw or postpone approval if:
 - Any unethical principles or practices of the project are revealed or suspected.
 - It becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the REC or that information has been false or misrepresented.
 - The required annual report and reporting of adverse events was not done timely and accurately.
 - New institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary

ISSUED BY:

UNIVERSITY OF VENDA, RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Date Considered: **March 2021**

Name of the RESSC Chairperson of the Committee: **Prof Takalani Mashau**

Signature: 



Appendix 2: Research Questionnaire Phase 1



QUESTIONS FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Topic: Attributes of Ideal Grassroots Community Leaders for Sustainable Rural Development: The case of Ward Committees in Vhembe District, South Africa

This guide intends to gain community perceptions regarding attributes of ideal grassroots community leaders for sustainable rural development. The guide was designed for academic purpose and shall be used for that only. The focus group discussion is estimated to take 30- 60 minutes. Recorded discussions will remain anonymous and they will be kept safe until they are transcribed and translated word by word. Please take note that there is no wrong answer and participants are free to withdraw their participation at any stage of the discussion.

Section A: Demographic information

1.1. Name of Village:

1.2. No. of participants: _____

1.3. Group Description: (please tick appropriate below)

Categories			
a) Youth Female	b) Youth Male	c) Adults Female	d) Adults Male

Section B: Perceptions on Ward Committee and Sustainable Development

2.1. What roles do Ward Committee members play?

2.2. Considering the roles of Ward Committee members, what do you believe are the attributes that community members should use when electing them? Why do you think so?

2.3. Do you believe that communities elect Ward Committees based on these attributes or criteria? Why?

Thank you for your time and participation!

Appendix 3: Research Questionnaire Phase 2



University of Venda

School of Agriculture

Institute for Rural Development

Research Questionnaire: Phase 2

Researcher: **Nemathithi AJ**

Topic: **Attributes of Ideal Grassroots Community Leaders for Sustainable Rural Development: The Case of Ward Committees in Vhembe District, South Africa.**

Instructions

I am conducting a study on attributes of ideal grassroots community leaders for sustainable rural development. Ward Committee Ultimately, I would like to recommend a set of criteria that can be used when electing members to serve in Ward Committees. This will help fulfil the requirements of a Master's in Rural Development degree. Thus, I humbly request you to participate in this study. Kindly rank the attributes indicated below, using the following scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Uncertain, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

Section A

1. Name of Village: _____
2. Gender: Male Female
3. Age group: Youth Adu
4. Highest level of education _____

Section B

1. Community-perceived roles of Ward Committee members	Rank
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a) Facilitate service delivery to the communities they serve	
b) Solicit and disseminate useful information to their communities	
c) Promote and facilitate public participation in the process of development	
d) Build and maintain relationships with all stakeholders in the ward	
e) Create unbiased communication channels and co-operative partnership between Municipality and community within a ward	
f) Make recommendations on any matter affecting the ward to the Ward Councilor or the local Municipal Council	
2. To what extent do you believe that these are the ideal attributes of Ward Committees given the roles listed above?	Rank
Each Ward Committee member must have the following personality traits or characteristics	
a) Trustworthy and no record of corrupt practices	
b)	
c) Loves and respects people (Humane) and thus has a likeable personality	
d) Approachable	
e) Ability to work in harmony with a wide range of people (including youth, women, people with disabilities and other marginalized groups) and organisations within and outside the community	
f) Passionate about development work	
g) Often demonstrates patience even when things do not seem to work	
h) Has a heart for helping others (loves helping others)	
i)	
j) Knowledgeable about how government works, in particular local government	
k) Understands the roles and responsibilities of Ward Committees and legislations governing their operations	
l) Shows empathy (ability to understand and share the feelings of others)	
m) Preferably young	
n) Preferably a female	

o) Not bossy and regards himself or herself as a servant of the people	
Educational background	Rank
a) Has basic education (at least attended primary or secondary education but did not complete grade 12)	
b) Passed Grade 12	
c) Has tertiary education (Diploma to degree)	
Communication skills	Rank
a) Multilingual (understands and speaks many languages)	
b) Can write reports that are informative or rich in facts	
c) Listens well and only responds or comment after understanding fully	
d) Speaks well to public audience	
e) Facilitates engagements involving many stakeholders such that participants understand what is deliberated on and feel respected or included in decision making	
Accessibility	Rank
a) A local person who stays in the Ward	
b) Actively participates in civic/community gatherings and other community events	
Interest and involvement in local governance and community building work	Rank
a) Ever willing to help others	
b) Dedicated to community development work	
c) Has an in-depth understanding of community issues complex	
d) Relies on objective assessment situation before making decisions	
e) Has foresight or vision that resonates with local community aspirations	
f) Involves community in decision making	
g) Conceptualization	
3. To what extent do you believe that community members elect Ward Committees based on these criteria?	Rank
Service delivery	

a) Ward Committee members are competent in serving and helping vulnerable groups to meet their basic needs	
b) Ward Committee members act and deliver on their promises	
c) Communities within the ward receive thorough feedback on matters raised within the Municipal Council through the Ward Councillor	
d) Implementation of projects is intended to improve people's lives in the ward	
e) Community projects are inclusive in terms of allocation of jobs or employment	
Candidate personality	Rank
a) Personality is the most important factor when determining a candidate's ability to carry out roles and responsibilities of the Ward Committee	
b) Community members elect people they trust and believe are servant leaders	
c) We elect people who can be advocates for the community	
d) People who are trusted to be mobilizing agents for community action	
e) Individuals who are able to network and can work with many stakeholders	
f) Ability to mobilise various resources is crucial when we elect Ward Committee members	
g) Excellent communication is important for a Ward Committee member to be effective	

Appendix 4: Informed Consent

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

UNIVEN Informed Consent

Appendix B

LETTER OF INFORMATION

Title of the Research Study : Attributes of Ideal Grassroots Community Leaders for Sustainable Rural Development: The Case of Ward Committees in Vhembe District Municipality of South Africa

Principal Investigator/s/ researcher : Ms Awelani Jeanette Nemathithi (BA Honours in Rural Development)

Co-Investigator/s/supervisor/s : Prof J Francis (PhD); Dr NP Lavhelani (PhD) & Dr L R Kone (PhD)

Brief Introduction and Purpose of the Study: In 2015, world leaders adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a new agenda to guide the international community's efforts to improve the quality of people's lives. Therefore, Effective leadership, starting at grassroots community, is required to achieve the SDGs and this necessitates matching the development agenda with competent leaders that grassroots communities elect. This study focuses on grassroots community leadership with special focus on Ward Committees around Vhembe District. The study aims to build an understanding of what rural communities perceive as attributes of ideal grassroots leaders for sustainable development. The rationale of the study is to have more informed members of ward committees and communities in recognizing the special issues associated with sustainable rural development.

The study will adopt an exploratory sequential mixed method design which will unfold in two phases. Stratified sampling and random sampling will be applied to draw sample from the residents of Ha-Mashau community. Thematic content analysis, Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation, Man Whitney and Kruscal Wallis test of IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.0 software will be utilized for

data analysis. It is anticipated that the results of the study will help develop an assessment tool that government, local municipalities and grassroots communities should consider when facilitating elections of ward committee.

Outline of the Procedures: Data for the study will be collected in two phases; Phase 1: Qualitative and Phase 2: Quantitative. The techniques involve focus groups discussions and priority ranking for the survey. Semi-structured interview guide will be used to explore and gain deeper understanding of qualities of persons eligible to serve in Ward Committees from 57 residents of Ha-Mashau. Data collection for phase 1 will take place at the identified local and accessible premise in the community. Focus group discussions will be consisting of 8 groups with 6 to 9 members each. The groups will be categorized into age groups and within this age groupings gender will also be taken into consideration in the arrangements of participants. The groups will brainstorm in identifying qualities of persons eligible to serve in Ward Committee recording on an open-ended questionnaire. Following will be plenary presentations which will enable the researcher to consolidate participant's responses per question. The researcher will therefore generate themes which will be used to develop a likert-type scale questionnaire which will allow participants to rank and confirm data from previous qualitative phase for overall analysis of the Study.

Risks or Discomforts to the Participant: None

Benefits: Outcomes of this study will help participants to recognize the special set of skills for persons who can lead sustainable rural development work in an effective way, leading to improved wellbeing of the residents of the local community. The study will produce an assessment tool that can be recommended for use when electing Ward Committee members. The researcher will fulfil the requirements of a Masters degree and will also produce a review paper for publication.

Reason/s why the Participant May Be Withdrawn from the Study: None

Remuneration : None

Costs of the Study : None

Confidentiality : The participant details and information

will be treated as confidential. No information will be shared without the participant's

permission. Data will be stored in a safe place only accessible to the researcher and supervisor until the dissertation is examined.

Research-related Injury : None

Persons to Contact in the Event of Any Problems or Queries:

Prof J Francis on 015 962 8804/ joseph.francis@univen.ac.za. Please contact the Researcher, Ms AJ Nemathithi on 083 868 2421/ awe.nemathithi@gmail.com or the University Research Ethics Committee Secretariat on 015 962 9058. Complaints can be reported to the Director: Research and Innovation, Prof GE Ekosse on 015 962 8313 or Georgeslvo.Ekosse@univen.ac.za

General:

Potential participants must be assured that participation is voluntary and the approximate number of participants to be included should be disclosed. A copy of the information letter should be issued to participants. The information letter and consent form must be translated and provided in the primary spoken language of the research population

CONSENT

Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:

- I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, Ms AJ Nemathithi, about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study - Research Ethics Clearance Number: **SARDF/21/IRD/08/1904** —,
- I have also received, read and understood the above written information (*Participant Letter of Information*) regarding the study.
- I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my sex, age, date of birth, initials and diagnosis will be anonymously processed into a study report.
- In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerized system by the researcher.
- I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study.
- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the study.
- I understand that significant new findings developed during the course of this research which may relate to my participation will be made available to me.

Full Name of Participant	Date	Time	Signature
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I,.....	
.....			

(**Awelani Jeanette Nemathithi**) herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.

Full Name of Researcher

Nemathithi Awelani Jeanette
Signature.....


Date: **26/11/2020**

Full Name of Witness (If applicable)

.....
Signature.....
Full Name of Legal Guardian (If applicable)

Date

.....
Signature.....

Date.....

Appendix 5: Request for Permission



University of Venda

University of Venda P. Bag X5050

Thohoyandou, 0950

Limpopo, South Africa

08 August 2020

Mashau Traditional Authority

Ha-Mashau, Doli village

Dear Sir/ Madam

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT STUDY IN HA-MASHAU VILLAGE LIM345 (COLLINS CHABANE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY.

I am Awelani Jeanette Nemathithi, A Masters student at the Institute for Rural Development, University of Venda in South Africa. As part of fulfilment of the Masters in Rural Development qualification, I hereby request for a permission to conduct research titled: *Attributes of Ideal Grassroots Community Leaders for Sustainable Rural Development: The Case of Ward Committees in Vhembe District Municipality of South Africa*. The purpose of the study is to determine the rural community-perceived attributes of ideal grassroots leaders for sustainable development. This will be carried out with a specific focus on Ward Committees at Ha-Mashau community. The study will describe and provide a deeper understanding of qualities of Ward Committee members for sustainable development. Through the study findings an assessment tool that government, local municipalities and grassroots communities should consider when facilitating establishment of ward committees will be recommended. Data will be collected through a workshop engaging community members both youth and adults considering males and females.

The results of this study will be used for academic purposes only and data collected will be treated with strict confidentiality and professionalism only the researcher and supervisor will have access.

Your consideration will be highly appreciated.

Sincerely

MS A.J Nemathithi