

**Exploring the mode of communication used by the
stakeholders of the water service sector of the Mangaung
Metropolitan Municipality (MMM)**

by

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DECLARATION

I, Musukali Nanousha Kusakana, student number _____, hereby declare that this master's dissertation, titled "Exploring the mode of communication used by the stakeholders of the water service sector of the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality (MMM)", is my own work; all the ideas, arguments, phrases, and results are entirely mine; and that the thesis has not previously been submitted by me or anyone else at the Central University of Technology, Free State, or at any other university.

28 February 2024

Musukali Nanousha Kusakana
(_____)

Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my loving and caring husband, Professor Yves Kanzumba Kusakana; this work couldn't have been done without you. Thank you for showing me the way, and for always being there every step of the way. You have taught me to be determined and to persevere. Words cannot describe my appreciation to you. You are my source of inspiration. Thank you.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DWS	Department of Water and Sanitation
EPWP	Expanded Public Works Programme
GCIS	Government Communication and Information System
Km	Kilometre(s)
km ²	Square kilometres
m ³ /a	Cubic metre(s) per annum
MMM	Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality
PFMA	Public Finance Management Act
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SALGA	South African Local Government Association
SMS	Short Message Service
WSA	Water Service Authority
WSP	Water Service Provider

ABSTRACT

Mangaung City has been affected by water shortages, which at times last for extended periods of time. Ageing infrastructure is one of the main causes. The consequences of ageing infrastructure include poor water quality and poor service delivery. The Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality (MMM) is the Water Service Authority (WSA), as well as the Water Service Provider (WSP), that works in collaboration with Bloem Water. The latter is the WSP to a part of Mangaung consumers on behalf of the MMM. Water provisioning and quality challenges seem to emanate from the two organisations that are responsible for providing water. These challenges are mainly because of communication issues. There seems to be a communication gap between the two WSPs. Conflicts result from the fact that the roles of the WSA and the WSP are not clearly specified. The communication failure stems from a lack of distinguishing between the functions of the WSA, the WSP, and the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS), as well as a lack of devoted skills and capacity. The DWS is not financially independent. The income derived from water and sanitation services is paid into the municipal account, and the MMM's DWS obtains its budget allocation from Bloem Water's water board. This means that the DWS competes with the MMM for budget allocations (South African Local Government Association [SALGA], 2011). Water commerce is a critical component of the economic viability and sustainability of the municipality; a lack of efficient management and adjustments therefore places the institution at risk. The provision of water requires the capacity and ability to regulate; however, most municipalities lack the knowledge and skills to maintain the function of a WSP (SALGA, 2011). Communication challenges between those responsible for water have consequences; among which the provision of poor water quality by the municipality. Communities have developed a negative perception of the MMM and the DWS, which is caused by the current communication challenges. The community expects the MMM to provide high-quality services and to be informed at the correct time of any challenges or difficulties that may affect them. Furthermore, if the local government applied an efficient communication strategy, the reputation and relationship would not break down if a crisis occurs.

This study sought to explore and understand how the MMM communicates with its stakeholders, both internally and externally, what method of communication it uses for

external communication with its consumers, and whether the communication is effective at all levels. This study employed the qualitative research approach with an interpretivist perspective to address the research questions and objectives. The research found that the majority of communication is carried out internally via emails, meetings, and telephone calls, while external communication is mostly conducted via social media, followed by emails, radio, WhatsApp groups via the corporate body, and traditional word of mouth. The study found that the communication is not effective, based on the feedback of the respondents who participated in the study. Many of them raised complaints of an absence of communication between them and those responsible for water, which means that the communication is one way and that it is only those responsible for communication that sends the information, and not vice versa. The community complains about the MMM's call centre telephones going unanswered, unavailability to the community, as well as a lack of feedback. Due to the size of the sample, this study's research results cannot be generalised.

Keywords: Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality (MMM); Bloem Water; communication challenge; water quality; water services delivery; Water Service Authority (WSA); Water Service Provider (WSP).

RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS FROM THIS STUDY

1. Kusakana, M.N., Coetzee, M. & Oke, S. 2019. A proposed innovative framework to explore the communication challenges between Bloem Water and the Mangaung Municipality. In *2019 Open Innovations*. New Jersey: IEEE. pp. 104-108.
2. Kusakana, M.N., Coetzee, M. & Oke, S. 2023. *Analysing the effectiveness of the communication modes used by Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality and its community regarding water services*. Accepted for the International Conference on Studies in Education and Social Sciences (ICSES), Antalya, Turkey, 20-23 October 2023.

CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality (MMM), as both the Water Service Authority (WSA) and the Water Service Provider (WSP) for the greater Mangaung, works in collaboration with Bloem Water¹, which is the WSP to a part of Mangaung. Bloem Water is a state-owned entity and a national government enterprise that was established in terms of the Water Services Act (No. 108 of 1997) and the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) (No. 1 of 1999) (Bloem Water, 2023). Communication and collaboration between the MMM and Bloem Water are of the utmost importance to ensure the constant provision of quality water to the consumers of the greater MMM area.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

According to the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS, 2011), the MMM is one of eight Category A municipalities in the country, which means that it is a “municipality that has exclusive municipal executive and legislative authority in its area” (South African Local Government Association [SALGA], 2011). “Metropolitan municipalities” are large cities with over 500 000 voters (Thekiso, 2016). The MMM includes the cities and towns of Bloemfontein, the greater Mangaung, Botshabelo, Dewetsdorp, Soutpan, Thaba Nchu, Van Stadensrus, and Wepener.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996) states in Chapter 7 that “the municipality has the right to govern, on its own initiative, the local government affairs of its community, subject to national and provincial legislation, as provided for in the Constitution” and that “the national or a provincial government may not compromise or impede a municipality’s ability or right to exercise its powers or perform its functions” (Republic of South Africa [RSA], 1996). According to the Constitution, municipalities must encourage social and financial growth in the areas under their

¹ Bloem Water’s name changed to the Vaal Central Water Board on 13 July 2023 (Greengazette, 2023). As this study was conducted before July 2023, the name Bloem Water was retained in this thesis.

jurisdiction. Municipalities' developmental responsibilities are to structure and manage their administration and budget, to prioritise the basic requests of the community, and to encourage the social and financial developments of the area (Thekiso, 2016).

Mayekiso, Taylor and Maphazi (2013) stated that municipalities are expected to create favourable environments, attract investment, guarantee that infrastructure is of a suitable and acceptable standard, make available mechanisms to support and train communities, and to improve communities economically through the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) or cooperatives. According to the Municipal Systems Act (No. 32 of 2000), the regulations of a municipality should be open to the requirements of the community and it is the obligation of the local government to encourage entrepreneurship and micro and medium enterprise development in order to raise the standard of living of its citizens (RSA, 2000).

The MMM is responsible for the provision of quality water to the citizens of the metro. The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) plays an important role in water services in South Africa, and in the Mangaung area. The DWS has developed strategies and objectives in accordance with the established legal frameworks, along with the National Water Services Regulation Strategy of the previous Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (SALGA, 2011). The objectives of the DWS, as indicated by SALGA (2011), include access to basic services such as water and sanitation services, environmental safety (including the treatment of water), the economic sustainability of water services delivery, efficient water services infrastructure, and fee effectiveness (ensuring that the customer is respected, that resources and money are not wasted, and that customers do not pay more than they should for water).

According to SALGA (2011), the strategy and structure for water services are also set out in the regulatory framework for WSAs. A WSA is expected to manage all water services delivery problems at the municipal level. In a situation where the WSA is also the WPS, as in the case of the MMM, the self-operating principle applies, namely that the municipality is both the regulator and provider of water services. SALGA (2011) states that the distinction between the role of the WSA and the WSP is unclear; the MMM has therefore been conducting the WSP and WSA roles in its own way. In general, it is accepted that the MMM is both the WSA and the WSP, while Bloem Water is the WSP to a part of Mangaung.

The National Water Act (No. 36 of 1998) of South Africa describes the MMM as a WSA, as it is a municipality. According to SALGA (2011), the roles of a WSA, such as those of the MMM, are to decide on policies concerning tariffs, subsidies, and service standards; to established tariffs; to execute and apply water services by-laws; to plan the supply of water services; and to monitor potable water standards and used wastewater discharge. In its role as both a WSA and a WSP, the MMM should work hand in hand with Bloem Water.

Bloem Water was established in 1991 with the responsibility to provide quality water in bulk to the community (Bloem Water, 2023). In terms of the Water Services Act (RSA, 1997), it provides water to 12 municipalities (including the MMM), 26 mines, and six solar power-generation plants. In September 2019, a dispute between the MMM and Bloem Water regarding an agreement signed by both parties for the provision of bulk water and claims of non-payment for water supply services went to the Bloemfontein High Court (Mtebele, 2019). The agreement stated that the MMM would buy at least 70% of the bulk water provided by Bloem Water. The conflict arose when the MMM failed to pay the minimum percentage to Bloem Water as agreed (SALGA, 2011). Bloem Water planned to restrict water supply to the MMM but was ordered by the High Court to restore water to all affected areas (Mtebele, 2019). According to SALGA (2011), the DWS was contracted to help solve the disagreement as it seemed that there was a lack of communication between the parties.

In addition to the influence of this dispute on water delivery, since early 2016, the inhabitants of the MMM have experienced serious water shortages, sometimes for extended periods of time (Water for Africa, 2017). The Minister of Water and Sanitation of South Africa at that time, Nomvula Mokonyane, blamed the lack of water resources on drought (South African Government News Agency, 2015). The then Chairperson of Bloem Water, Tefesto Phistane, also blamed the “severe drought” for the problems with the water supply (Coetzee & Semenokane, 2016). Green Overall (2018), however, wrote that Mangaung was challenged with interrupted water supply as a result of poor infrastructure and maintenance. Water for Africa (2017) also mentioned the ageing infrastructure and the deteriorating water treatment works of the MMM area. Green Overall (2018) stated that the water quality in the MMM is poor and that it is sometimes impossible to drink tap water.

Motse (2018) mentioned that in 2018, the residents of the MMM raised concerns over the city's water quality but the MMM rejected this. Motse (2018), however, referred to tests that indicated significantly high levels of *Escherichia coli* and coliform bacteria in the water. The tests also showed that the water supplied to Soutpan was not safe for human consumption. Former Free State Health Department spokesperson, Mondli Mwambi, told OFM News that the Department of Health was not aware of the large volumes of people with stomach-related illnesses as a result of the poor quality of water (Motse, 2018). As a result, the MMM suggested that the population in affected areas should boil the water before consumption (Green Overall, 2018).

According to South Africa's Constitution, it is the government's obligation to provide water of good quality to communities. This, however, does not appear to be the case in the MMM (Coetzee & Semenokane, 2016). As a consequence of the provision of water of poor quality, the communities developed a negative perception of the management of the MMM and the DWS. The community expects the MMM to provide them with high-quality services and to inform them at the correct time of any challenges or difficulties that may affect them in any way.

Both Bloem Water and the MMM, as representatives of the DWS, are responsible for potable water provision to the community. Bloem Water treats the water and supplies it to the MMM, which then distributes the water to the community. The MMM, as a metropolitan municipality, has a mandate to also treat and supply its own water to the community. Both are therefore responsible for water infrastructure maintenance. The MMM, however, is the link between the communities, the broader government structure of the Free State, and the WSPs; whenever there is an issue concerning service delivery, the municipality therefore has the obligation to inform communities and to manage the problem.

Horak (2006) stated that if the local government implemented better communication, the reputation of the municipality and the relationship with the community would not be compromised when crises occur. Alberts (2011) indicated that municipalities use several communication structures that are tactically established in communities to achieve their mandates and to build relations, and which are necessary for service delivery and feedback. Alberts (2011) further stated that government mandates demand that national, provincial, and local government communication on issues of

services delivery should increase access to information that allows the public to participate in the country's future and in the improvement of their own livelihoods. According to Alberts (2011), the administration of communication by a municipality, such as the MMM, is a critical factor in ensuring better communication with the communities in the municipal area.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

From the literature and the discussion above, it is clear that both the MMM and Bloem Water have problems with communication and forward planning, and that they do not understand their roles in the water services sector. Water provisioning and quality challenges seem to emanate from both these organisations, which can be traced to communication issues that affect water quality, water quantity, and overall water services delivery to the community.

The literature review also indicated that no research has been conducted on the mode of communication between the WSAs (MMM and DWS), the WSPs (MMM and Bloem Water), and the communities of Mangaung.

These aspects, as well as uncertainties regarding the communication between the MMM and Bloem Water, and between these two entities and the community, informed the research problem:

- The National Water Act of 1998 indicates that a WSA, a WSP, and a municipality together are responsible for the provision of potable water to communities (RSA, 1998a).
- Bloem Water and the MMM, as the representatives of the DWS, are both responsible for supplying good-quality water to the community via well-maintained infrastructure at an affordable price.
- The MMM must buy at least 70% of the water available from Bloem Water and pay for it with the funds earned from the community. Previous disputes between these entities emanated from accusations of non-payment of the 70% of water.
- The mode of communication between Bloem Water and the MMM negatively influences the goals set in Bloem Water's annual report for 2017/2018 regarding sustainable water services delivery.

- The community is not always informed of, or prepared for, problems with water supply, poor-quality water, or interruptions in water delivery.

The problems listed above motivated the need to conduct this research in order to explore the existing mode of communication between the MMM, the representative(s) of the water sector (which includes Bloem Water), and the communities of the cities and towns in MMM regarding the delivery of quality water.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The problems listed above led to the following primary research question of this study:

What would be the most effective communication strategy that MMM and Bloem Water can implement to improve communication between themselves and the community, ultimately benefiting the delivery of water services to the MMM community?

The following secondary research questions were set to assist in answering the primary research question:

- What is the existing mode of communication between Bloem Water and the MMM?
- What are the communication challenges between Bloem Water and the MMM?
- How have the mode of communication and the communication challenges between Bloem Water and MMM impacted water services delivery to the community?
- What is the opinion of members of the community regarding the quality of water services delivery in the MMM?
- What solutions can be implemented to solve the communication challenges between the MMM and Bloem Water, and between the MMM and the community?

1.5 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this study was to investigate the communication methods employed by Bloem Water and MMM to enhance the provision of services to the communities in Mangaung. Additionally, the study aimed to assess their progress in

achieving the goals outlined in Bloem Water's annual report for 2017/2018. These goals include developing, operating, and maintaining infrastructure, ensuring sustainable water service delivery, managing financial affairs, securing the supply and quality of raw water resources, and optimizing business processes and systems through strategic partnerships with stakeholders.

This study also investigated whether the two organisations worked together towards these goals and whether they worked to maintain a positive reputation in their communities through their partnership. The study thus explored the mode of existing communication between the different stakeholders. The focus of this research is unique as such a study has not been conducted in Mangaung before.

The main research aim of this study was:

To investigate what the most successful communication strategy is for the MMM and Bloem Water to implement in order to improve communication between them and between them and the community to the benefit of water services delivery to the community of the MMM.

To achieve the main research aim, the following research objectives were formulated:

- To investigate the existing channels of communication between the MMM and Bloem Water.
- To explore the existing communication framework within each entity operating in the MMM water sector; e.g., Bloem Water, the MMM, and the DWS.
- To explore the existing mode of communication between the MMM, the water supplier, and the communities.
- To advise on an improved communication strategy for water services delivery.

1.6 METHODOLOGY

This study, conducted within the discipline of Communication Science, employed the qualitative research approach with an interpretivist perspective to address the research questions and objectives. The study focused on understanding and interpreting various aspects of communication among the stakeholders who are the focus of this case study. The systems theory perspective on communication was adopted to elucidate the interconnections between individuals or groups. Data

collection involved the use of open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, which enabled the respondents to freely express their views and thoughts. The collected data were subjected to content analysis.

1.6.1 Research approach

According to Creswell (2009), qualitative research is an approach to exploring and understanding individuals or groups regarding a social or human challenge. Since the qualitative approach deals with research that requires exploring and understanding the meaning of individuals or a group to social or human difficulties, this approach was deemed the ideal research approach for this study. The study explored the lack of appropriate communication between the stakeholders; this approach was therefore considered as the best suited for the study and the data-collection methods used.

1.6.2 Research paradigm

The study was conducted from the disciplinary context of Communication Science. An interpretivist perspective was used to identify, understand, and interpret various aspects of the mode of communication between the stakeholders. Edirisingha (2012) argued that the goal of interpretivist research is to understand and interpret the meaning of human behaviour rather than to generalise and predict the causes and impacts thereof. Lapan, Quartaroli and Riemer (2012) argued that every qualitative research study has an interpretive element that focuses on uncovering participant views. Human behaviour was a significant component of this study since the study intended to interpret the mode of communication between the various stakeholders. Because this study was purely qualitative, with the objective to explore the modes of communication that exist between the stakeholders, the interpretivist paradigm was ideal to use.

1.6.3 Research design

This research used the systems theory perspective on communication. According to Ludwig von Bertalanffy, the systems theory perspective on communication is characterised by understanding the interconnection that exists between two or more people or groups of people (Hammond, 2010). The systems theory assisted the researcher with analysing and understanding of the cause of the ineffectiveness of

communication between the water stakeholders, namely the MMM, Bloem Water, and the communities involved.

1.6.4 Data collection

Data were collected via open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. An open-ended questionnaire allows respondents to express their views without being influenced by the researcher (Sincero, 2012). Using an open-ended questionnaire in this study allowed the respondents ample time to think analytically and critically about the questions and to provide honest answers. The questionnaire was used for the first part of the research.

A semi-structured interview was selected as the data-collection method for the second part of this study. A semi-structured interview allows interviewees flexibility and freedom in deciding what needs to be described, argued, and explained and how much detail to include in their answers (Pathak & Intratat, 2012). Respondents can therefore freely express their views concerning the existing mode of communication this study sought to investigate.

The reason for using open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews was that some participants might not be comfortable expressing their views verbally, while others may not prefer questionnaires. It was also more suitable to collect data from citizens using questionnaires, while the semi-structured interviews were effective when collecting data from the WSP representatives.

1.6.5 Sample and sampling procedure

This research was based on an unbiased, honest search for answers to the research problem. The study intended to use a sample of two participants from the MMM and 110 respondents from the MMM community. The sample size of 110 participants in total was chosen to ensure comprehensive coverage of the subject matter. This research used both purposive sampling and basic random sampling to select respondents (Crossman, 2019). Purposive sampling (used to select the two participants from the MMM) is characterised by deliberate targeting of respondents. This method was used to select participants from the community. This was done by conducting a survey via a Google Forms, where people were asked to nominate and

invite other people to also complete the questionnaire. Ultimately, 110 people responded.

1.6.6 Data analysis

The responses to the open-ended questions were analysed by using content analysis. Content analysis is a research technique that helps to analyse the actual content of data involved (Obaid, 2011). The data were recorded, transcribed, organised, and then segmented, and each segment was labelled with a code. Thereafter the codes were collapsed into themes and each theme was discussed in detail to find meaning in the data. To find meaningful patterns in the data, sub-group analysis was used, while enumeration of certain aspects from the questionnaires supported the analysis of the demographic data (Tharyan, 1998). Qualitative data analysis was used to analyse the closed-ended questions of the questionnaire, which were mostly related to the respondents' demographic information. The aim of data analysis is to find corresponding topics and to explore how these topics relate to each other (Maree, 2007).

1.6.7 Quality assurance of the study

The trustworthiness of this study was ensured by adherence to acknowledged standards of internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity.

Validity refers to the quality of the research process and the objectivity of the researcher in collecting and analysing the required data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Data were collected using interviews and questionnaires in order to enhance the validity of the study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

Reliability is defined as the precision and accuracy of the research procedure and the stability of the data (Guba, 1981:86). In order to increase the reliability of this study, each step followed was described in sufficient detail to enable another researcher to repeat the research and, if using the same procedures and criteria, to obtain similar results.

Objectivity refers to the impartiality of the data that were collected and the analysis procedures followed (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:9). The researcher personally

transcribed and analysed the raw data to enhance the validity and trustworthiness of the study.

Quality assurance was also achieved by adhering to all ethical standards.

1.6.8 Ethical considerations

All possible measures were taken to ensure that the study complied with ethical standards (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Ethical considerations were observed as follows:

- Ethical clearance was obtained from the university before the study commenced.
- Before collecting data, a clear explanation of the focus and the purpose of the study was provided to all participants.
- All participants were requested to read and sign informed consent forms prior to participating in the study.
- Participation in the study was voluntary and all participants were free to withdraw at any point in time.

Possible limitations of the study, as well as the significance of the study, are discussed in Chapter 6 (see Sections 6.2 and 6.3).

1.7 CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

This research sought to contribute to effective communication between corporates and their customers, which in this case is between the MMM, Bloem Water, and the community. This work therefore:

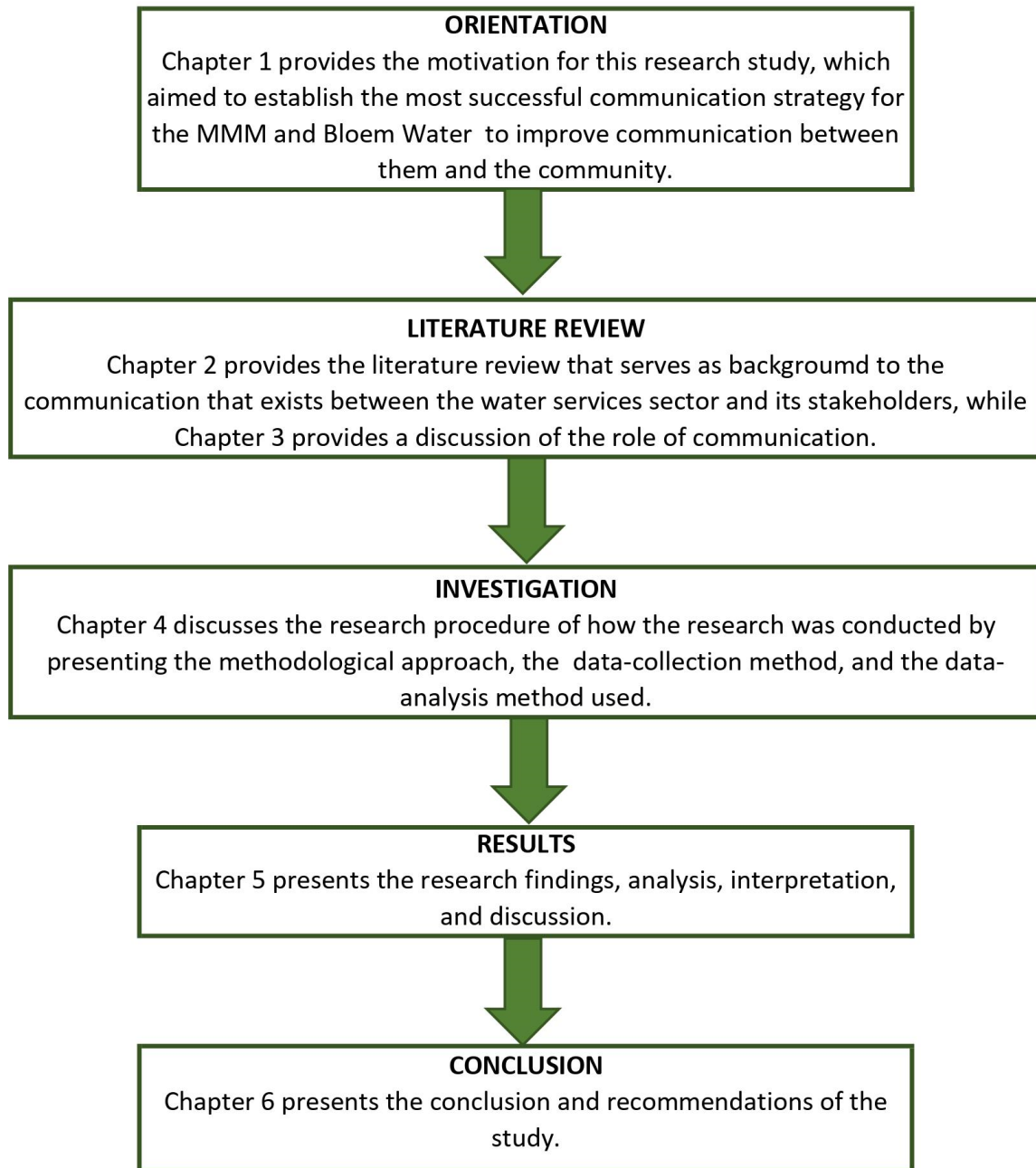
- provides an opportunity to the MMM to learn the opinions of its customers regarding communication around water services delivery;
- assists the MMM to identify some of its communication issues with the community regarding water services; and
- provides an opportunity for the MMM and Bloem Water to work on a strategy to rebuild their image among the community through effective communication.

The communication strategy proposed by this research may help the MMM to improve both its internal and external communication. This research served as a platform to the MMM community to express themselves freely regarding the quality of the MMM services that they have been receiving over the years.

1.8 LAYOUT OF THE STUDY

This thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1 presents the orientation to the study, Chapter 2 discusses literature on the communication between WSPs and their communities and on organisational communication, Chapter 3 discusses the role of communication, Chapter 4 describes the research design and methodology of the study, Chapter 5 presents and interprets the research findings, and Chapter 6 provides the final conclusion and recommendations of the study. The process of the study is illustrated in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1: Layout of the study



1.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter introduced the research process of this study, as illustrated in Figure 1.1, as an investigation into the mode of communication used by those responsible for water services in the MMM to the community.

The following four key aspects can be highlighted:

- The problem statement and subsequent research questions that directed the study: The problem statement centres on the poor water quality provided by the MMM to its community, as well as its communication challenges. The purpose of the study was to explore and discover which mode of communication the two WSPs (Bloem Water and MMM) are using to ensure that the communities in Mangaung are best served, as well as to achieve their organisational goals.
- The theoretical foundation of the study is built on the lack of communication, or poor communication, between the MMM with its community, as well as multiple complaints from the community regarding poor water quality.
- An outline of the research design of the study: This research used the case study design, a qualitative research approach, the interpretivist paradigm, and the systems theory perspective on communication. Data were collected using open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The collected data were analysed using content analysis.
- The measures taken to ensure a study of high quality and adherence to acceptable ethical standards: Measures to ensure research quality comprised internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity.

The chapters that follow further discuss the aspects that were introduced in Chapter 1. The literature review in Chapter 2 commences with a review of the background of the MMM and Bloem Water.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND STUDY CONTEXT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter studies key information relating to the connection that exists between the two stakeholders that are the focus of this study, namely the MMM and Bloem Water, as well as the MMM community. This is done to gain an understanding of the mode of communication currently implemented by and between the two shareholders and the community to identify any gaps between the two entities and their community. Furthermore, aspects relating to the association between municipalities and their stakeholders are studied to identify any relationship problems and possible issues between the two organisations.

The researcher also reports on current research on various liaison aspects relating to both the MMM and Bloem Water.

2.2 THE MANGAUNG METROPOLITAN MUNICIPALITY (MMM)

The MMM is located in the Free State province, which is situated almost in the middle of South Africa. The Free State province is surrounded by the provinces of Gauteng, the Eastern Cape, the Northern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, and North West, as well as the Kingdom of Lesotho. The Free State is divided into five municipalities: the MMM and four district municipalities, namely Fazile Dabi District Municipality, Lejweleputswa District Municipality, Thabo Mofutsanyana District Municipality, and the Xhariep District Municipality. These districts are each divided into 18 local municipalities in total.

The MMM is one of eight metropolitan municipalities in South Africa, which means that it includes surrounding towns and suburbs under one local authority (Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, 2020). The cities and towns of the MMM are Bloemfontein, Botshabelo, Dewetsdorp, Soutpan, Thaba Nchu, Van Stadensrus, and Wepener (Bloem Water, 2023).

Mangaung means “place of the big cats”, or “the place of the cheetahs” in the Sesotho language. The MMM was originally named the Central District of Bloemfontein.

Bloemfontein, a name originating from Dutch, means “the fountain of flowers” (MMM, 2019). Bloemfontein was officially founded in 1845 as a British fort (Schoeman, 1980).

The population of Mangaung comprises approximately 861 651 people (according to 2020 statistics) from approximately 276 905 households (Municipalities of South Africa, 2020). Sesotho is one of the four languages spoken in the Free State province, alongside Afrikaans, English, and Setswana (excluding dialects) (SALGA, 2011). The city’s main economic sectors are community services (35.3%), finance (26.88%), trade (16%), transport (11.8%), and manufacturing (3.5%) (MMM, 2019).

In August 2016, the geographical scope of the MMM was extended to include the Naledi Local Municipality and Soutpan (see Figure 1.2). The size of the MMM thus expanded from 6 863 km² to 9 879.3 km². The amalgamated metropolitan municipality has seven urban centres, with an extensive rural area. Bloemfontein is the largest of the urban centres of the MMM, and the sixth largest city in South Africa. Bloemfontein is the administrative capital of the Free State province and the judicial capital of South Africa (MMM, 2019).

Figure 1.2: The amalgamated metropolitan municipality of Mangaung



Source: Municipalities of South Africa (n.d.)

The MMM, as all municipalities, falls under the Municipal Structures Act (No. 117 of 1998), which provides for the creation or founding of municipalities. The Act also defines how each category of municipality should be constituted (RSA, 1998b).

2.2.1 The government structure and duties of a municipality in South Africa regarding water provision: The case of the MMM

South Africa has three categories of municipalities, namely Category A (metropolitan), Category B (local), and Category C (district) (RSA, 1998b). The MMM is a Category A municipality (GCIS, 2011; Thekiso, 2016), which is a “municipality that has exclusive municipal executive and legislative authority in its area” (RSA, 1998b). A Category B municipality is a local municipality that is responsible for all local service delivery in its area (RSA, 1996:Chapter 7). A Category C municipality is a district municipality that is responsible for the development of substructures and sewage, water, and electric systems.

The Constitution of South Africa states that “the municipality has the right to govern, on its own initiative, the local government affairs of its community, subject to national and provincial legislation, as provided for in the Constitution” and that “the national or a provincial government may not compromise or impede a municipality’s ability or right to exercise its powers or perform its functions” (RSA, 1996:Chapter 7). The Constitution further states that a municipality should support the social and economic development of the area in which it exercises its functions.

Thekiso (2016) emphasised that a municipality also has the responsibility to prioritise the needs of the community, support social and financial development, and take care of the management and structure of the administration. Mayekiso *et al.* (2013) stated that to attract investments and to ensure that the infrastructure remains in an acceptable condition, municipalities are expected to create a favourable environment that attracts or interests investors.

Thekiso (2016) stipulated that municipalities should put in place supportive and assistance arrangements for their communities and to improve their economy through the EPWP. As stipulated by the Municipal Systems Act, the offices of a municipality should be built according to the requirements of the community and should deliver

services that address the community's needs (RSA, 2000). One of these needs is access to water and sanitation services.

2.3 THE WATER SERVICES ACT (NO. 108 OF 1997)

The Water Services Act of 1997 is a South African law that governs water services and water resource management in the country. It aims to provide a framework for the provision of equitable and sustainable water services, as well as the protection and conservation of water resources (RSA, 1997). The Act was published with the aim of repealing the Water Act of 1956, which was known for racial discrimination in terms of water distribution. Schreiner (2013) stated that the 1956 Water Act was founded on a principle called "Water-rich Europe", which was not suitable for water-scarce countries such as South Africa. The international water community lauded the new South African Water Services Act as one of the foremost pieces of water legislation in the world (Schreiner, 2013). The Act is used by other countries to improve and readjust their own water legislation.

The Water Services Act recognises the right of all South African citizens to have access to basic water services, including a minimum amount of water for drinking, sanitation, and personal hygiene. The Act also emphasises the importance of maintaining and monitoring water quality standards to ensure the safety of water supplies (RSA, 1997). Furthermore, the Act sets out the roles and responsibilities of various institutions involved in water services, including the establishment of Water Services Boards to provide bulk water; WSAs at the municipal level that are responsible for planning, developing, and managing water services within their jurisdictions; and WSPs to plan service delivery, to ensure that running water is provided, and to provide feedback on operational performance and results.

The Water Act designates certain categories of municipalities as WSAs. South Africa has a total of 169 WSAs and 278 municipalities, which means that not every municipality is a WSA (Toxopeus, 2019). The Act stipulates that each WSA must ensure that citizens have access to basic water services and should assist consumers with other services offered by the municipality at an affordable price. The Act separates the roles of WSAs and WSPs, even if both fall under the same municipality. According to the Water Act, the MMM is a WSA. According to SALGA (2011), the roles

of a WSA, as is the case of the MMM, are to decide on policies on tariffs and service standards, to execute and apply water services by-laws, to plan the supply of water services (Water Services Development Plans), and to monitor quality results such as potable water standards and used wastewater discharge (SALGA, 2011). The responsibility to provide water to the communities of the MMM lies with both the MMM and Bloem Water, who should work together in collecting and managing water in rivers and dams and other catchment areas for domestic, agricultural, and industrial use.

2.4 MMM AND BLOEM WATER INFRASTRUCTURE

The MMM is located in one of South Africa's pivotal water management areas, namely the Upper Orange Water Management Area. The MMM's area of jurisdiction is located in two tertiary catchments or drainage regions, namely the Modder and the Caledon river catchments. Several dams have been constructed in the area, primarily as sources of potable water for the urban areas and for agricultural purposes, while a number of pans also occur in the north-western part of the MMM area. The word "dam" in South Africa means a barrier made to conserve water (Bloem Water, 2019).

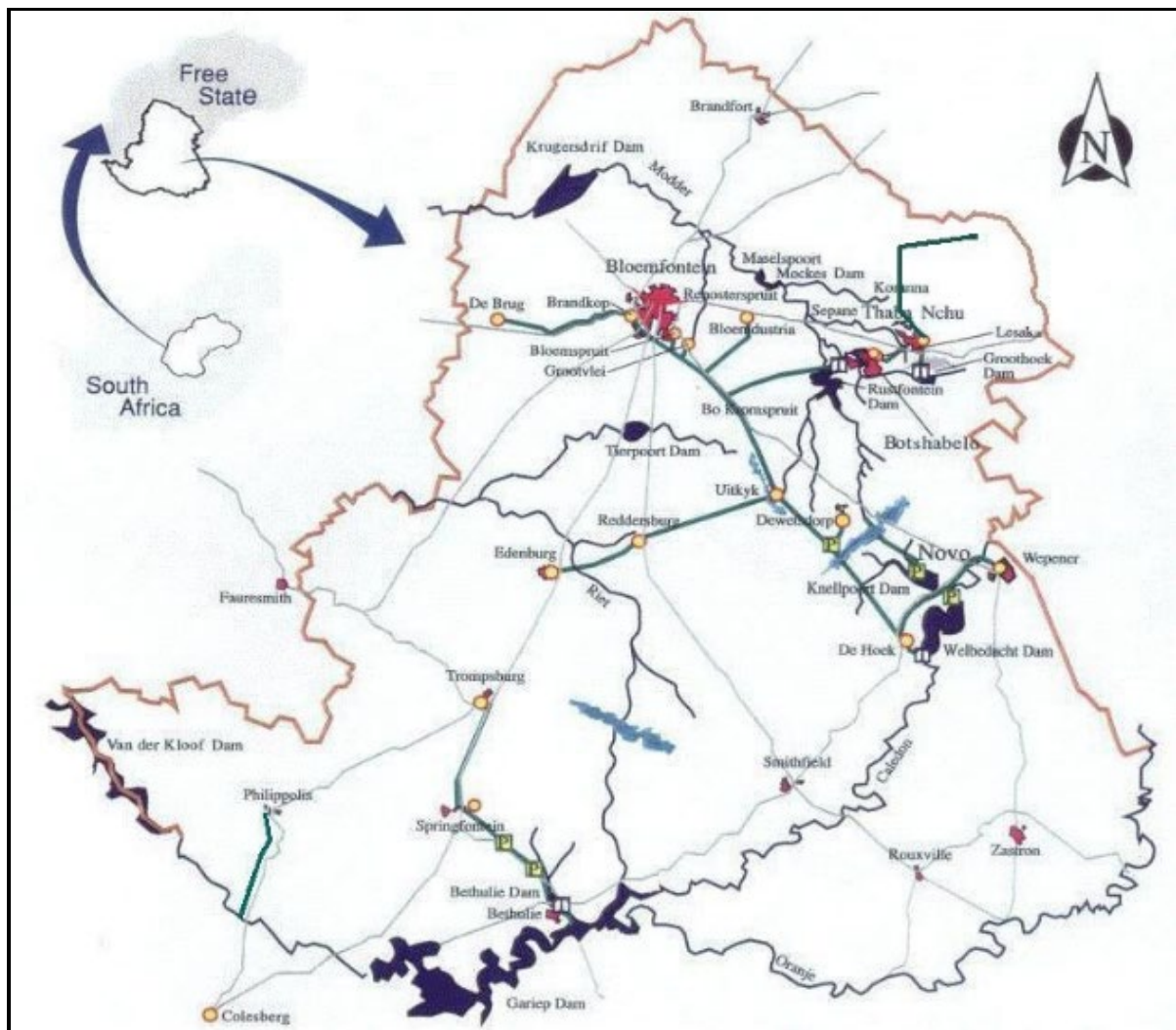
According to Bloem Water (2019), dams in the Modder River catchment include the Rustfontein, Mockes, Groothoek, and Krugersdrift dams. Dams in the Caledon River catchment include the Welbedacht, Knellpoort, and Egmont dams. The Caledon River, which forms the border between South Africa and Lesotho, is the largest tributary of the Orange River and also runs into the Gariiep Dam. Although other smaller dams and pans contribute to the water supply, the main water supply dams (as listed above) are as follows:

- The Rustfontein Dam is located on the Modder River to the west of Botshabelo. It was commissioned in 1954 to be a major water source for the Bloemfontein area. It currently provides the bulk of the water supplied to Bloemfontein via Maselspoort. Water from the dam is released into the Modder River, which flows into the Mockes Dam between Bloemfontein and Botshabelo. The Rustfontein water purification works was commissioned at the end of 1998 and supplies Botshabelo and Thaba Nchu with purified water.
- The Mockes Dam is primarily a balancing dam that ensures a constant supply of water to the purification works at Maselspoort.

- The Groothoek Dam, built in 1982, is located south of Thaba Nchu on the Kgabanyane River and provides water to Thaba Nchu and the villages around it.
- The Krugersdrift Dam is located on the Modder River north-west of Bloemfontein and mostly supplies water for irrigation purposes to the downstream Modder River Government Water Scheme.
- The Welbedacht Dam, built in 1973, serves as the central storage of the Caledon-Modder River. It provides water to Bloemfontein and its surrounding areas, Botshabelo, and Dewetsdorp. Lower yields are caused by siltation and the increasing demand for water from the Caledon-Bloemfontein Regional Water Supply Scheme.
- The Knellpoort Dam, constructed in 1988, was built to contribute to the production of water from the Welbedacht dam to Bloemfontein. The dam receives water from the Caledon River via the Tienfontein pump station, which is released back into the Caledon River to feed the Welbedacht Dam.
- The Egmont Dam is an arch type of dam on the Boesmankop Spruit, a tributary of the Caledon River near Vanstadensrus. The dam was constructed primarily for irrigation purposes in 1937 (Bloem Water, 2019).

The locations of the dams and the water infrastructure of the Free State are illustrated in Figure 1.3. The green lines illustrate the transfer of water to the towns mentioned above. The Rustfontein and Welbedacht dams provide the most water. The second biggest scheme is the Modder River Region, which supplies water to Botshabelo, Thaba Nchu, and Excelsior. It also supplies raw water to the Maselspoort weir (Bloem Water, 2019).

Figure 1.3: Location of the dams and water infrastructure of the Free State



Source: Bloem Water (2019)

The MMM as both a WSA and WSP treats potable water at the Maselspoort weir, while it also purchases treated water from Bloem Water. The MMM provides potable water to 214 445 households, and has a backlog of 17 555 households. Bloem Water is the main supplier of bulk potable water to the urban centres of the Modder-Riet sub-catchment, supplying approximately 100 million m³/a of treated water to around 580 000 people. Water supply to the MMM is severely stressed. According to Bloem Water (2019), several measures have been identified to supply additional bulk water to the MMM.

2.5 BLOEM WATER

Bloem Water, original named Bloem Area Water and later the Bloem Water Board, was established in 1991 by the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry as a Water Board with the objective to provide water to the communities of Bloemfontein, Bainsvlei, Bloemspruit, Botshabelo, Dewetsdorp, and the Caledon/Bloemfontein Government Water System. In agreement with the responsibilities of the Water Services Act and to operate and account for its actions, the name Bloem Area Water was changed to Bloem Waterland in 1994, as published officially in the South African Government Gazette (Bloem Water, 2015).

Bloem Water, in terms of its financial and management aspects, as stipulated in the PFMA (RSA, 1999), reports to the Minister of Water and Sanitation, who is the Executive Authority of the Department of Water Affairs (Bloem Water, 2015).

Since being founded, Bloem Water has been operating the water services delivery in most areas of Bloemfontein, the municipalities in the southern part of the Free State, including Bethulie and Philippolis, the Thaba Nchu district (a former homeland with 42 villages, situated 65 km to the east of Bloemfontein), and the town of Excelsior, which is situated in the eastern Free State. Seven water treatment works are currently operating in the area of the Modder, Caledon, and Orange rivers, all of which are situated under the water authority of the MMM, Mantsopa Local Municipality, and Kopanong Local Municipality. Approximately 95% of the households in the MMM are supplied from bulk surface water systems that are operated by the MMM and supplied by Bloem Water (South African Heritage Resources Information System, 2023). Bloem Water (2017) summarised its duties as follows:

- Develop, operate, and maintain infrastructure to ensure sustainable water services delivery.
- Manage financial affairs to meet current and future obligations.
- Secure the supply and quality of raw water resources.
- Achieve an aligned and efficient institution through optimisation of all business processes and systems.
- Engage in strategic partnerships with all relevant stakeholders.

The transfer of raw and bulk water is faced with challenges of siltation, which poses a risk to the availability of raw water; however, according to Bloem Water (2023), mitigation plans are in place to address this challenge. In this, and other challenges, Bloem Water and the DWS of the MMM (as both WSPs and WSAs) must work closely together to deliver the services as stated by the Water Services Act.

It is expected of a WSA to manage all situations of water services delivery problems at the municipal level. As mentioned by SALGA (2011), in the situation where the WSA is also the WSP, such as in the case of the MMM, the municipality plays both the role of the regulator of the services and the provider of the services. Section 20(1) of the Water Services Act states that the WSA, if also acting as a WSP, should be able to clearly define what the role of the WSA is and what the role of the WSP is, although the management role rests with the WSP (RSA, 1997). SALGA (2011) stated that there is no clear definition to distinguish between the role of the WSA and the WSP, but that the role of each must be clearly managed as described by the Water Services Act.

The duties of the DWS, the MMM, and Bloem Water as the WSPs and WSAs, as summarised from the literature, are listed in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Duties of the DWS, MMM, and Bloem Water

The DWS in South Africa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for the management and regulation of the country's water resources. • Must ensure sustainable and equitable use of water. • Provides access to safe water and sanitation services at affordable costs. • Manages the water catchment areas of dams and rivers.
Bloem Water as a South African Water Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for bulk water supply and distribution to consumers in the MMM. • Manages water resources and water quality by ensuring that clean and safe water is supplied. • Responsible for the maintenance of water supply infrastructure and resources. • Responsible for customer services related to water distribution.
The MMM as the WSA and WSP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for providing water and sanitation services to the community. • Responsible for quality water supply to the community within its jurisdiction. • Manages water services through fixed rules, tariff policies, and standards for potable water. • Manages and serves the dual roles of a WSP and a WSA.
A WSP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures that clean and safe running water is provided. • Manages proper sanitation services to residents. • Manages and maintains the infrastructure, distribution networks, and operational aspects of water and sanitation. • Provides feedback on operational performance and results to the government and community.

A WSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executes and applies water services by-laws. • Manages water services provision and delivery. • Ensures the affordability of water. • Creates and implements policies, regulations, and strategies related to water supply and sanitation services.
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Source: SALGA (2011)

It is clear from Table 1.1 that the duties and responsibilities of the various water providers overlap and may be confusing, even to the staff themselves. Communication between the various departments and organisations, as well as open communication with the community, will be of great help to address some of the pressing problems in water services delivery.

2.6 THE COMMUNITY OF THE MMM

The community of the MMM is one of the key shareholders in this research study because they are in a sense the main reason for the existence of the MMM. The MMM must ensure that the needs of the community are addressed by providing them with basic services such as electricity, refuse removal, and water, as well as promoting socio-economic development and a safe environment. An online survey with community members was conducted to obtain their opinions regarding the services they receive from the MMM. The questions asked in the survey were helpful in achieving the objectives of this research and addressing the research questions.

2.7 ADDITIONAL LITERATURE ON BLOEM WATER AND THE MMM

Various works are available on different topics related to the MMM and Bloem Water. A few of the topics available in the literature are as follows:

- Alberts (2011) examined the role of external government communication in the service delivery of the MMM with the objective of discovering which roles the government plays in the MMM's service delivery.
- Ratikane (2013) researched the quality and safety of drinking water sources in the Bloemfontein area of the MMM.
- Thekiso (2016) investigated the role of local government in supporting entrepreneurship and small business development in the MMM. The aim of the study was to understand the role of local government in economic development,

job creation, minimising poverty, and maintaining a middle-class standard of living for residents and communities. Thekiso (2016) also researched how the MMM dealt with difficulties concerning unemployment and economic development of communities and how it aimed to increase local citizens' income levels.

2.8 CONCLUSION

In September 2019, the long, drawn-out dispute between the MMM and Bloem Water over claims of non-payment for water supply services within the metro went to the Bloemfontein High Court (Mtebele, 2019). The influence of this dispute on water delivery has caused the citizens of the MMM to face serious water shortages since early 2016 (Water for Africa, 2017). The role of the WSA (the MMM and DWS) and the WSP (MMM and Bloem Water) still causes confusion for both entities and must be clearly specified to address the poor reputation of both entities among their communities.

The following chapter discusses the role of communication in organisations, with the focus on the nature of communication between the MMM and its stakeholders.

CHAPTER 3: THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Communication is a process that happens between at least two people and may include people sending information in words, visuals, writing, or behaviour from one to another through a channel, which may consist of speech, gestures, signals, written materials, and so forth (Kilgore, 1998; Foulger, 2004). The communication process is complete once the receiver receives, decodes, and understands the sender's message (Riva & Galimberti, 1998).

This chapter discusses different modes of communication, the role of communication in organisations, barriers and communication challenges, communication gaps between organisations and stakeholders, and the nature of communication between the MMM and its stakeholders.

3.2 MODE OF COMMUNICATION

The mode of communication is the way or ways in which communication takes place; it is the process of how communication is conveyed from one entity to another. "Communication" originates from the Latin word *communis*, which refers to the sharing of ideas (Keilling, 2021).

According to Keilling (2021), there are numerous modes of communication. The following four main modes of communicating are found in everyday life:

- Verbal communication refers to the use of language to convey a message from one individual to another individual or to many persons, either face to face, telephonically, via conference call, or during a physical meeting.
- Non-verbal communication indicates communication where language is not involved. It involves eye contact, gestures, posture, body language, and facial expressions.
- Written communication refers to a written mode of communication to convey a message via letters, emails, reports, journals, memo documents, books, etc.

- Visual communication uses visual elements to communicate or to convey a message. It can be done by means of drawings, art, charts, graphs, or sketches. It is useful for presentations and is usually accompanied by written or verbal communication.

An organisation must communicate with its stakeholders in order to build a positive image, and the communication can be in oral, written, visual, and/or audio format. The communication is addressed to the target audience that the entity wishes to have as a customer (Markowitz, 2014). In general, there are three steps towards achieving this communication objective:

- The organisation wants to be known by its target clients, including the services and products that it offers or provides.
- The organisation wants to be loved and appreciated by its target clients, and it wants to portray a positive image to its clients.
- The organisation wants to receive positive feedback from its target clients; it therefore aims to make the client react to it.

Communication objectives consist of identifying the target that the organisation will be addressing its communication campaign to (Spacey, 2017). According to Spacey (2017), sending news, making known decisions, setting policies, and taking action are the main objectives of communication. The person who will be receiving the message must be able to understand it in order to send positive feedback to the sender.

3.3 THE ROLE OF ORGANISATIONAL COMMUNICATION

According to Alberts (2011), the mode of communication between organisations, local government, and the community was informal until late in the 19th century. The creation of media relations officers, communication researchers and experts, people responsible for communications between organisations and the community, marketing experts, etc. as specialised roles only started in the 20th century when organisations and communities started growing in numbers. The mass media also became very powerful (Alberts, 2011). In today's business world, organisational structures have become more complex with the effect of global, social, economic, and technological developments, and organisational communication has become vital for organisations to achieve their goals (Zorlu & Korkmaz, 2021).

Sabuncuoğlu and Tüz (1995, in Zorlu & Korkmaz, 2021) define organisational communication as

a social process that enables the continuous exchange of information and ideas between the departments and elements within the organization and the organization and its environment or the establishment of necessary relations between the departments in order to ensure the functioning of the organization and to realize the aims of the organization.

In terms of the MMM and its stakeholders regarding the provision of water, it seems that no organisational communication takes place. During direct discussions with representatives of the MMM, the researcher was told that the municipality does not have a communication strategy of its own. All communication strategies come from “above”, which refers to the South African government. The government creates a communication strategy and sends it to the provinces and their respective municipalities for implementation. The government uses a system of “development communication”, which is defined as

the art and science of human communication applied to the speedy transformation of a country and the mass of its people from poverty to a dynamic state of economic growth that makes possible greater social equality and the larger fulfilment of the human potential (GCIS, 2006).

This system provides information regarding service delivery and the challenges faced by the government to the communities.

The objective of development communication is to ensure that community plans and strategies are important and sustainable, and consider the variety of communities with different cultures, languages, and levels of literacy when disseminating information. The development communication approach is a two-way communication method, which means that the government must be responsive to communities’ feedback. The messages sent by the government must show communities how they can benefit and improve their lives. The methods used by the government to communicate with communities for promotional purposes are workshop, roadshows, dramas, *izimbizos*, loudspeakers, posters, flyers, keyholders, T-shirts, caps, events at stadiums or community halls, and word of mouth, especially in deep rural areas (GCIS, 2006).

The government also uses another way of communicating with the communities called “BuaNews”, which is an online government news service operated by the GCIS (2006). It aims to facilitate the provision of rapid and easy access to information and to keep communities informed of government progresses. It provides the newest information related to the government to community, national, and international media.

Preliminary research was conducted by SALGA in 2003 and 2004 on the level of communication in communities, as supported by the GCIS. The findings of the research showed that the level of communication in municipalities was not structured or organised. A follow-up workshop was held in 2005 to identify progress on the previous results regarding the level of communication in all South African provinces and the finding was that there was no established communication system in all three spheres of the government, and that the municipalities did not use the communication procedures used by the national and provincial government. It seems as if none of the above-mentioned communication methods are used by the MMM, as no proof of the use of any of these could be found by this study.

The role of communication must answer questions such as why, when, how, and what to communicate. To ensure effective communication, those responsible for communication must:

- know when to send a message;
- explain what is unclear or not well received by its target;
- provide an explanation that will help the target to understand any suggested plan(s);
- reassure the community to gain their trust;
- give them real information on anything that might be going on;
- convince people who do not agree with the rules to accept them;
- encourage stakeholders to participate in a project;
- ensure changing certain aspects that the stakeholders do not agree with;
- consider stakeholder opinions;
- get to know the people or the community being targeted and understanding them;
- create a mode of communication suitable to all levels and let them know about it;

- take different language usage into consideration;
- provide feedback to enquiries by stakeholders; and
- identify communication challenges (GCIS, 2006).

Effective communication therefore involves several key responsibilities: communicators must establish inclusive communication channels at the right time, clarify unclear information, provide comprehensive explanations, establish trust within the community, offer accurate updates, persuade people to accept proposed plans, encourage stakeholder engagement, understand the target audience, respond to enquiries, and identify and tackle communication barriers and challenges.

3.4 BARRIERS AND COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES

Communication can be an obstacle to developing and preserving good relationships between co-workers in an organisation and can make daily work very challenging. According to Eisenberg, Goodall and Trethewey (2013), four barriers of communication, called “noise”, exist:

- Physical barriers are physical interference such as cell phones, receiving guests, a blaring television or radio, and other things that draw attention and make one lose focus.
- Semantic barriers are the choice of words used in communication, how they are used, and which meaning they are given. One word can have different meanings depending on one’s understanding and to whom they are addressed, which can cause a barrier if two people do not understand or cannot decode a message in the same way.
- Process barriers entail that each process in a communication action works step by step and if one step is missed, or if some are privileged above others or omitted, it can cause an obstruction in communication. An obstruction can also be caused by language barriers, speech failures, sentimental feelings, lack of feedback, or fear.
- Psychosocial barriers occur in non-social communication; for example, when workers from certain fields have their own code and communicate between themselves in that code without considering those who are not in the same field

or do not have the same background. This can make communication very difficult because others cannot decode the message (Antos & Ventola, 2008).

Alberts (2011) stated that distortion as a communication barrier is when information is deformed from its original form and becomes untrue. When the two-way flow of communication goes wrong, it is also a communication barrier. A two-way flow of communication is when feedback is sent by the receiver of a message to the sender. When a superior communicates with a subordinate, it is called vertical two-way communication. When a conversation occurs between colleagues who have the same position in an organisation, it is called horizontal two-way communication, and when communication is direct and official, it is called symmetric two-way communication (business communication) (Katz, 1957).

Falco and Kleinhans (2018) discussed the one-way flow communication paradigm, which occurs when communication only flows in one direction and the reception side does not have a way of providing feedback to the sender. An example is communication from the government to citizens where citizens cannot express their ideas or opinions on, for example, public policies because the information or the message sent to them is absolute and the government's final decision.

Juneja (2018) mentioned that effective communication is a procedure of communication between a sender and receiver to share opinions, ideas, and messages to understand each other better. Furthermore, Juneja (2018) noted the characteristics of effective communication by stating that the message sending by the sender must be transparent, precise, truthful, all-inclusive, and trustworthy. The sender must also know the background of the receiver to ensure that the message sent will achieve the purposes of what it was sent for. The message must also reflect the sender's personality.

According to Juneja (2018), for communication to be effective, it must be managed by people who have the skills to provide effective communication. These skills include the following:

- **Observation:** The person must observe what he/she sees without commenting, judging, or condemning anything, as these may be seen as judgement or critique. He/she can obtain more information by only listening while observing to learn and know more about the situation.
- **Precision and concision:** The message sent must be brief, precise, and clear to avoid creating confusion for the person who will be receiving it. It must be clear and straightforward to facilitate quick understanding.
- **Hearing and interpretation:** For communication to be effective, a person must have the skill of listening to understand and interpret exactly what the message is about. Patience from both the sender and the receiver is required for the communication to be successful. Effective communication is the responsibility of everyone involved in the communication.
- **Emotional intelligence:** Emotions play a role in the relationship between the sender (superior) and the receiver (subordinate). Self-control is required and the environment must be peaceful to allow everybody to do their work in a harmonious atmosphere.
- **Self-esteem:** People must believe in themselves and in the goals they want to achieve to make communication effective.
- **Self-assurance:** Self-assurance helps people to communicate exactly what they mean and what is expected from the person who receives the message. It is the ability to speak out while also listening to others. Self-assurance also helps people to have courage and confidence in every kind of situation and to face any situation without difficulty.
- **Politeness:** A person must know how to treat people equally, how to talk to them respectfully, must listen to them and show them that their opinions matter, must avoid hurting people's feelings intentionally, and must be kind, professional, and courteous.
- **Non-verbal communication:** The sender must be able to establish non-verbal communication with the receiver, as some messages are conveyed with gestures, body movements, and facial expressions.

- **Choosing the right channel of communication:** The most appropriate medium must be chosen to convey a message, which will be influenced by the importance of the message, the goal(s) of the message, and the target audience.
- **Getting a reaction from the receiver:** Providing feedback on a message is important for senders because it will enable them to know that the information has been well received and to perform better if something is not right. Feedback therefore indicates that the communication has been completed successfully.

Juneja (2018) highlighted the sharing of ideas and messages between the sender and the receiver to enhance mutual understanding. Understanding the receiver's background and reflecting a positive sender personality are essential. Juneja's (2018) thinking about effective communication contributed to this study in that effective communication can be used as a strategy for any organisation.

Daniels (2022) opined that a communication strategy entails the formulation of a structured proposition that governs the dissemination of information both within and beyond an organisation. This strategy is characterised by the discerning selection of paramount objectives concerning the cultivation of a distinctive brand attitude strategy. A conducive atmosphere of concerted effort and interpersonal rapport among all organisational constituents substantiates the underpinning of a robust communication strategy.

Within the domain of communication strategy, an organisation is tasked with the meticulous explication of tasks that necessitate immediate completion, as well as those that require attention (Cook *et al.*, 2007). The significance of a communication strategy within an organisational context is underscored by its capacity to facilitate effective outreach to the intended audience, to ensure the attainment of objectives, and to foster an informed audience that is cognisant of the emblematic representation embodied by the organisation's brand or logo (Cook *et al.*, 2007).

Most communication barriers result from communication gaps between an organisation and its stakeholders. Effective communication between Bloem Water and the MMM is important for the effective provisioning of water and water-related services to their communities.

3.5 COMMUNICATION GAPS BETWEEN AN ORGANISATION AND ITS STAKEHOLDERS

A communication gap is a concept that is used to explain a situation where the information shared is not well understood by the recipient or misinterpreted, or when there is a lack of communication in an organisation (Kitchen.co, 2018). SALGA (2011) stipulated that the communication conflict between Bloem Water and the MMM are caused by the fact that the functions of the WSA and the WSP are not clearly specified. SALGA (2011) further reported that the communication failure arises from, firstly, not separating the functions of the WSA, the WSP, and the DWS, and, secondly, from a lack of devoted skills and capacity on the side of the MMM.

According to SALGA (2011), the DWS is not financially independent. The income derived from water and sanitation services is paid into the municipal account and the DWS obtains its budget allocation from the water board of Bloem Water. This means that the DWS competes with the MMM for its budget allocation. The point is that water commerce is a critical component of the economic viability and sustainability of the municipality, and a lack of efficient management and adjustment therefore places the institution at risk.

The provisioning of water requires the capacity and ability to regulate, while most municipalities lack the knowledge and skills to maintain the functioning of a WSP. Developing communication skills is essential for succeeding in any career; it builds confidence, plays a significant role in the effectiveness of communication between workers and management in an organisation, and may facilitate sending and receiving information, with a clear understanding of both sides of the communication cycle (Collins *et al.*, 2023). The MMM, however, lacks skills retention and a knowledgeable workforce (SALGA, 2011).

3.6 THE NATURE OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE MMM AND ITS STAKEHOLDERS

As seen in the media, the MMM and Bloem Water have had many conflicts and disputes that also directly affect the communities they both serve. It seems that the conflicts and disputes mostly result from the MMM's non-payment of water delivered by Bloem Water.

The local newspaper, *Bloemfontein Courant*, reported on 13 September 2019 that Bloem Water had announced plans to restrict water supply to the municipality from Sunday, 8 September 2019 (Mtebele, 2019). However, the scheduled cuts were quickly thwarted by the MMM through court action. The court ruled on 10 September that the water should be restored immediately. Bloem Water took the case to the Bloemfontein High Court, which ruled in favour of the MMM and instructed Bloem Water to restore water to affected areas with immediate effect. The spokesperson of the MMM at the time, Qondile Khedama, maintained that the metro had not defaulted on payments to Bloem Water, while Bloem Water maintained that the MMM's non-payment continued to affect Bloem Water's operations and its ability to implement critical infrastructure projects. Khedama stated that the MMM did not mean to involve the community in the entanglement between the MMM and Bloem Water. Khedama indicated that the MMM proposed a payment plan to Bloem Water in July 2019, but Bloem Water did not take the submitted payment plan into consideration and continued with the water restrictions. Khedama asked the community not to worry about the situation and stated that the MMM was working to maintain service delivery, that no water issues will exist at any level, and that it will continue to work towards its objectives (Motse, 2018).

However, in October 2021, conflict emerged again regarding water restrictions by Bloem Water to different areas of the MMM, mainly in the south of Bloemfontein, and it was clear that there was a communication problem between the MMM and Bloem Water. Khedama indicated, in a media statement released on 21 November 2021 on OFM, that the MMM got rid of its debt to Bloem Water (Mitchley, 2021). The statement was in reaction to a news bulletin on OFM that stipulated that the water interruption by Bloem Water in most parts of Bloemfontein and its surroundings was due to outstanding debt from the MMM to Bloem Water. Bloem Water declared that if the MMM did not pay its debt (R270 million at the time), Bloem Water would continue to reduce the waterflow from 70% to 30%. The MMM promised to make debt payments to Bloem Water by initially agreeing to pay R20 million per month. When this agreement was not met, Bloem Water reduced the water supply by 30%. This was done according to the Water Services Act of 1997 (section 4(5)), as amended by the Water Services Amendment Act (No. 30 of 2004). Bloem Water argued that it was

facing many financial problems, including debts owed to Eskom and obligations to buy water chemicals to be able to supply water services.

It is clear that the communication between the two entities is not successful since both provide contradictory information. During the period of the crisis, some conditions and actions were applied by Bloem Water, such as water supply maintained at a functional level and reducing all municipal water capacity while waiting for the MMM to respect the agreed-upon payment plan. This situation would not affect Bloem Water's direct customers, maintaining the infrastructure reservoir level was taken into consideration, and the stakeholders had the right to be updated on the situation (Hartzenberg, 2021).

On 22 August 2023, Netwerk24 reported that the MMM owed Bloem Water more than R700 million and was not paying the R20 million a month as previously agreed (Gericke, 2023). Outstanding debts from other municipalities to Bloem Water also amounted to nearly R700 million. As a result, Bloem Water was unable to pay Eskom the outstanding R25 million it owed the utility. The Minister of Water and Sanitation, Senzo Mchunu, then announced that Bloem Water and Sedibeng Water would be amalgamated under the new name, Vaal Central Water Board, in an effort to keep both of these WSPs functional (Gericke, 2023; Greengazette, 2023).

It is clear that on top of the mentioned financial problems, the lack of communication and contradictory statements about the financial problems have a negative impact on water services delivery to the community, and that the community suffers as a result.

3.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter on communication is one of the most important chapters of this research study since the research sought to explore the mode of communication between the MMM and its stakeholders. It was therefore very important to discuss in detail what is principally required in an organisation for communication to be effective, both internally and externally. This chapter discussed the nature of communication between the two entities in detail. It also mentioned their communication challenges, which allows the reader to gain a deep understanding of the actual nature of the communication between them.

In the process of this research, it was found that no research has been conducted on the mode of communication between the WSA (MMM and DWS), the WSP (MMM and Bloem Water), and the community of Mangaung. This research therefore focused on exploring the mode of communication between the MMM and its stakeholders.

The next chapter describes the research process of this study, including the data-collection and data-analysis methods.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapters 2 and 3 provided a comprehensive literature review on the mode of communication between the water authorities of the MMM and their stakeholders. Evidence concerning miscommunication was presented, which revealed a gap in communication between the MMM and its stakeholders, especially Bloem Water and the wider community.

The aim of this chapter is to describe how the research was conducted by explaining in detail the research paradigm, the methodological approach, and the data-collection and data-analysis methods, and justifying the choice of methodology. The research design and methods were selected to address the research question of this study, namely:

What will be the most successful communication strategy the MMM and Bloem Water can implement to improve communication between them, and between them and the community, to the benefit of water services delivery to the community of the MMM?

This research question can be answered by addressing the following secondary research questions:

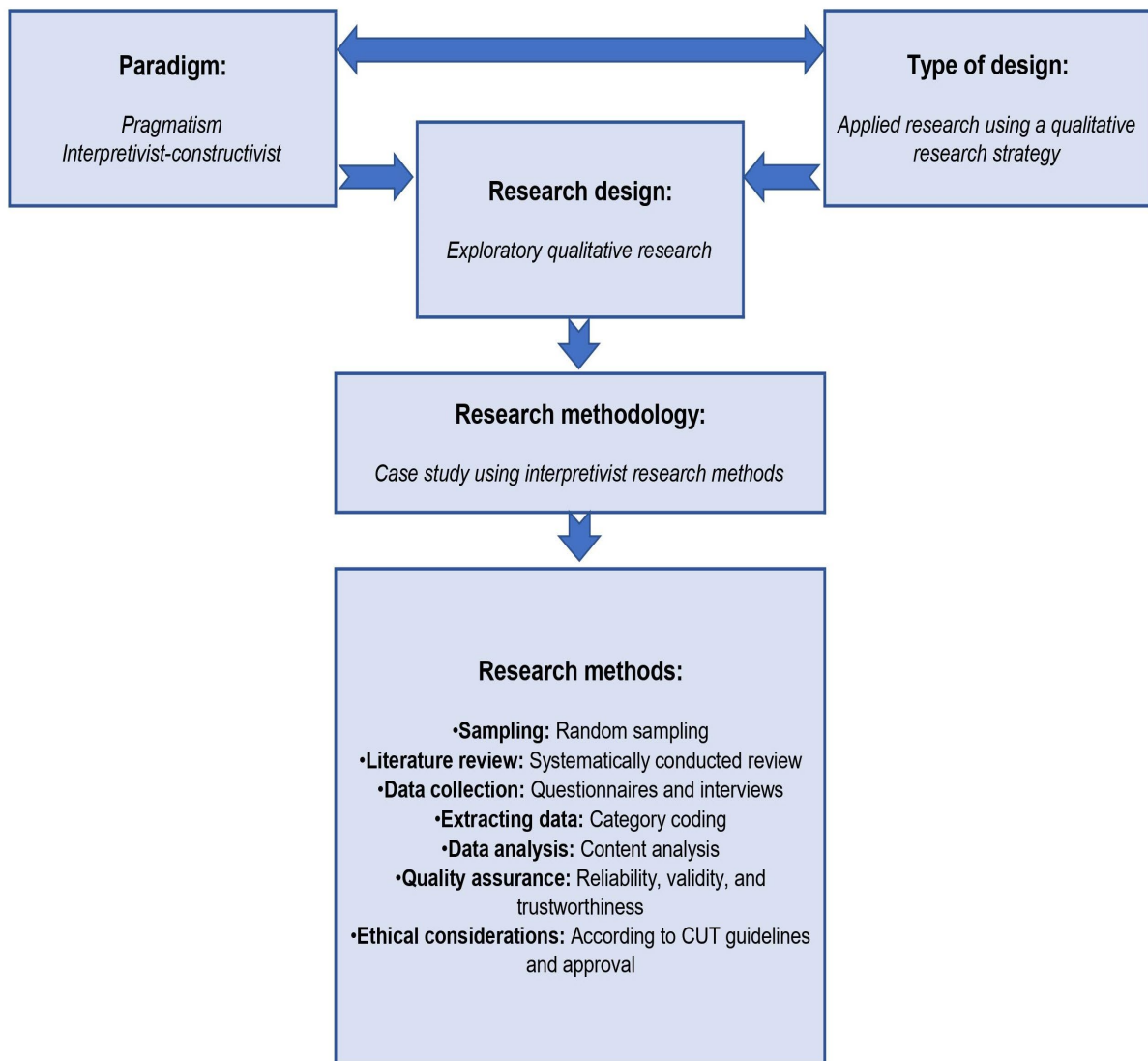
- What is the existing mode of communication between Bloem Water and the MMM?
- What are the communication challenges between Bloem Water and the MMM?
- How have the mode of communication and the communication challenges between Bloem Water and MMM affected water services delivery to the community?
- What is the opinion of members of the community regarding the quality of water services delivery in the MMM?
- What solutions can be implemented to solve the communication challenges between the MMM and Bloem Water, and between the MMM and the community?

The research design and methodology for this study are discussed according to the selected research strategies, the philosophical paradigm, and the research methods used. The process used to obtain input from the community can be regarded as a valid and reliable way to gather information from a group of people who represent the community. Detailed descriptions of the data provided contribute to the trustworthiness of the study. Quality assurance measures and the limitations of the study are discussed, as well as the ethical considerations adhered to during the research process. In this chapter it becomes clear how the literature review on the MMM, Bloem Water, and their duty to supply water supports the study and ultimately corroborates the study's findings.

4.2 FRAMEWORK FOR THE RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is the planned procedure for conducting research and should include all the decisions about the research approach, namely the philosophical assumptions, the selection of respondents, the methods of data collection, and the data-analysis methods (Burns, 2000; Maree, 2007). According to Creswell (2009), the nature of the research problem and the audience for which the study results are intended influence the research design. The research design framework as depicted by Creswell (2009) and adapted by the researcher for this study is illustrated in Figure 4.1. The discussion then proceeds to describing the type of research used for this study, namely applied research.

Figure 4.1: Framework for research design



Source: Compiled by the researcher based on Creswell (2009)

As illustrated in Figure 4.1, the research for this study falls under the category of applied research. Research can either be basic (also called fundamental) research, which helps to expand existing knowledge, or applied research, which provides a solution to an existing problem. Information obtained from basic research often creates a foundation for applied research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001).

Applied research is conducted to find practical solutions for existing problems and uses empirical methodologies to collect data in a specific area of study. The findings can be implemented upon the completion of the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Patton, 1990). Applied research is aimed at answering practical questions or solving practical problems by designing practical applications of research-based knowledge

(Gravetter & Forzano, 2009; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). The practical problem of this study comprised the communication problems between the MMM, Bloem Water, and the community.

This case study adopted a qualitative research approach to collect data, which were analysed using content analysis. Each aspect of the framework as applied by the researcher in this study is discussed in the following sections.

4.3 RESEARCH PARADIGM

This study, as a case study, was conducted from the disciplinary context of Communication Science. An interpretivist perspective was used to understand, interpret, and give access to various aspects of the mode of communication between the stakeholders. Edirisingha (2012) argued that the goal of interpretivist research is to understand and interpret the meaning of human behaviour, rather than to generalise and predict the causes and impacts thereof. Human behaviour was a significant component of this study since the study intended to interpret the mode of communication between various stakeholders.

A paradigm is a set of ideas on how to conduct research (Shah & Al-Bargi, 2013) and includes the methodological approach, ontology, and epistemology used in a research process. This study was grounded in the interpretivist research paradigm (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001; Dudovskiy, 2017). Interpretivism enabled the researcher to understand and interpret the various aspects of reality regarding the mode of communication between the MMM and its stakeholders. Defining, understanding, and interpreting the kind of relationship between the stakeholders and the various levels of communication that they use were significant components of this study.

The fact that this study was purely qualitative, with the objective of exploring the modes of communication that exist between the stakeholders, made the interpretivist paradigm ideal to use. An interpretivist methodology aims to understand social phenomena in their context (Dudovskiy, 2017).

4.3.1 Philosophical underpinnings

The term “worldview” encompasses paradigms, epistemologies, ontologies, and research methodologies (Creswell, 2009). It is a collection of theories, beliefs, and

assumptions about reality, and encompasses ontology, epistemology, and research methods (Maree, 2007; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). A worldview serves as a framework for observing and understanding accepted truths (Wimmer & Dominick, 2013; Babbie, 2007), and influences research method selection (Wimmer & Dominick, 2013; Creswell, 2009).

This study adopted a pragmatic worldview where truth relies on experience, inquiry, and action (Creswell, 2009). Pragmatism accommodates diverse methods and worldviews, which foster various data-collection and data-analysis approaches (Shields, 1998; Creswell, 2009). The study systematically analysed research on communication and on the history of communication between the MMM, Bloem Water, and the communities, as aligned to the interpretive-constructivist epistemology.

The worldview also influences the strategy of inquiry; the strategy of inquiry deemed most suitable for this study was qualitative in nature, specifically the exploratory qualitative research method of inquiry.

4.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

The objectives of this study were to investigate the existing channels of communication between the MMM and Bloem Water; to explore the existing communication framework within each entity operating in the MMM water sector; e.g., Bloem Water, the MMM, and the DWS; to explore the existing mode of communication between the MMM, the water supplier, and the communities; and to advise on an improved communication strategy for water services delivery.

The choice of research approach is particularly significant, as it determines how data will be collected. A research design has all the elements a researcher requires to guide a research study to reach its goal, such as the

kind of data required by the study, purpose of the study, sources of data, area of the study, time required for the study, type of sampling for the study, which method to use for data collection, and how will data be analysed (De Vaus, 2001).

Marczyk, Matteo and Festinger (2005) stated that the purpose of research is to find answers to questions linked to that research and to acquire new knowledge. A

research design is defined as a strategy that a researcher applies to a study to address a research problem. The method of designing a research study includes a logical basis for decision making (Akhtar, 2016). This study adopted the systems theory perspective on communication as proposed by Von Bertalanffy (Hammond, 2010; Booth, 1986). According to Von Bertalanffy, the systems theory perspective on communication is characterised by understanding the interconnection that exists between two or more people or groups of people (Hammond, 2010). It recognises the role that communication plays in the efficient functioning between the various components of organisations. In systems theory, the whole determines the character and functions of the parts (Waweru, 2002; Booth, 1986). This study on the modes of communication between the MMM, Bloem Water, and the community utilised the systems theory. The theory supports the analysis and understanding of the cause of the ineffectiveness of communication between the water stakeholders. Furthermore, the systems theory is the best option to devise a communication model that addresses these factors to improve organisational performance (Lai & Lin, 2017).

The theory applies to this research in the sense that the researcher intended to analyse and understand the general cause(s) of the problem of ineffective communication between the MMM and Bloem Water and to evaluate the interconnectedness of the stakeholders. Von Bertalanffy stated that the communication between stakeholders makes organisations what they are (Hammond, 2010). This research sought to understand the type of interaction that exists between the MMM and its stakeholders. Furthermore, the research intended to explore the mode of communication between the MMM's stakeholders and to generally observe how they are interconnected. A qualitative research approach was selected for this study.

4.5 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The choice of research methodology to use depends on the research problem. Morgan and Smircich (1980) argued that the purpose of research methods originates from the nature of the social phenomena to be explored.

Two types of data exist: quantitative data, which are used for measurement and numerical data requirements (Jansen & Warren, 2020); and qualitative data, which

refer to perceptions or opinions to understand the subjectively of social phenomena (Creswell, 2014). According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research is an approach of exploring and understanding individuals or groups that ascribe to a social or human challenge. Since a qualitative approach deals with research that requires exploring and understanding the meaning of individuals or groups in terms of social or human difficulties, this approach should be the ideal research approach. The study explored and discovered that there is a gap of appropriate communication between the stakeholders; the qualitative research approach was therefore deemed the best suited for this study.

Qualitative research refers to the collection and analysis of data in the form of words and text. It may also refer to data such as body language or visual elements. Qualitative data are often used in exploratory research (Jansen & Warren, 2020). For the purposes of this study, the qualitative research approach was used. To obtain more clarity on the meaning and nature of qualitative research, it is important to define and describe this research method.

Qualitative research focuses on a deeper understanding of a particular organisation or situation, instead of examining a situation based on a large sample (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research refers to non-numerical data and involves an interpretive, natural approach to research. This means that qualitative researchers study activities and objects in their natural state, and attempt to find their real meaning and to interpret a situation in a realistic way (Denzin & Lincoln, 1995). The main idea of qualitative research is to understand the everyday reality of people, their experiences, and their cultures. Creswell (2014) opined that qualitative research is an approach to explore and understand individuals, or groups, to understand social or human challenges.

Qualitative studies are defined as descriptive or exploratory (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:397). The word “exploratory” indicates that limited information exists about a topic, and that an investigative study is needed to investigate the topic and develop new knowledge (Babbie, 2007). The objective of an exploratory qualitative design is to describe behaviours, themes, trends, attitudes, needs, or relationships that are applicable to the units analysed (Du Plooy, 2009).

The qualitative methodology used for this study was the case study. The following sections discuss the research methodology and the research methods utilised in this study.

4.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: CASE STUDY

A case study is a research method that involves an in-depth, detailed examination of a particular case (a specific individual, group, event, or phenomenon) within a real-world context (Bromley, 1986; Feagin, Orum & Sjoberg, 1991). Case studies can be used in business, psychology, sociology, medicine, and other fields to gain a comprehensive understanding of a particular subject or problem. A case study may include one or many observations (one or multiple individuals and entities across multiple time periods, all within the same case study) (Gerring, 2007). While case studies provide explanations of single cases or phenomena, they can also provide theoretical insight into the features of a broader population and can explain outcomes in individual cases (Heale & Twycross, 2018; Gerring, 2007).

In a case study, researchers gather detailed information through various data-collection methods, such as interviews, observations, surveys, and document analysis (Bromley, 1986). The aim is to provide a holistic view of the subject under investigation, and often includes both qualitative and quantitative data. This study made use of interviews and questionnaires to gather qualitative data; however, the demographic data are illustrated using quantitative methods.

4.7 RESEARCH STEPS AND METHODS

Conducting a case study involves several steps to ensure a comprehensive and well-structured analysis. Creswell (2009) asserted that the term “research methods” involves the forms of data collection, analysis, and interpretation that researchers propose for their studies.

Yin (2003) and Hamel (1993) stated that the first step is to determine what is known about the case in the form of a review of existing literature, which also serves to establish a basic understanding of the case and informs the development of the research questions and research objectives. Once this is done, the next step is to collect the data via pre-designed tools. In this study, interviews and questionnaires

were used to collect data from the community and the management involved with water supply in the MMM.

The collected data were analysed by coding the respondents' answers into specific categories and using content analysis to identify patterns and themes within the data (Heale & Twycross, 2018). Based on the analysis of the collected data, conclusions could be drawn to address the research questions and the objectives and to suggest a communication strategy.

4.8 DATA COLLECTION

Data collection is a process of gathering and measuring information from various sources to answer the questions that a study has identified as suitable to achieve its objectives (Rouse *et al.*, 2017). The collection of appropriate, representative, and quality data is an important aspect of any research study.

4.8.1 Sampling methods

A sample is defined as a representative part of a larger group of the population and sampling is using a method of selection that was established in advance (Taherdoost, 2016).

A sampling method is a technique where the researcher has investigated several methods of data collection that may allow him/her to gather the particular data required from the sample (Taherdoost, 2016; McCombes, 2020). There are two types of sampling methods:

- Probability sampling, which was defined by Taherdoost (2016) as a sampling method where the sample is selected randomly from the population. It provides equal chances to all the members of the population to be selected. There is a variety of probability sampling techniques, namely simple random sampling, systematic sampling, stratified random sampling, cluster sampling, and multi-stage sampling.
- Non-probability sampling is a sampling method where the researcher carries out a selection of sampling for the study that is meant to determine the reality of the present situation. It is the method that goes along best with qualitative research (Taherdoost, 2016). The different types of non-probability sampling

are quota sampling, snowball sampling, convenience sampling, and purposive sampling.

The first part of this research utilised purposive sampling, as defined by Crossman (2019). Purposive sampling is characterised by deliberately targeting respondents according to the requirements of the study to be conducted. The first part of this research aimed to use semi-structured interviews to collect data from two representatives from the MMM and two from Bloem Water. These people were selected because of their position in the organisations, with the objective to obtain authoritative information from both organisations. They were also selected based on their knowledge of the situation and with the purpose of the study in mind (Crossman, 2019). Only the two delegates from the MMM agreed to participate in the study; none of the senior staff of Bloem Water was willing to speak to the researcher or answer any questions.

Basic random sampling was used to select respondents from the community (Crossman, 2019). Snowball sampling was used for this study, whereby a link to the online questionnaire was sent to participants and the researcher asked the participants to share the link with other people who might also be willing to participate in the study.

A questionnaire was compiled and the link was sent via Google Forms to a few people in Mangaung known to the researcher. They were asked to provide random members of the community with information about the study to encourage their participation in the research. With this method, 110 people responded to the Google Forms questionnaire.

4.8.2 Methods for data collection

Data for this study were collected via open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. An open-ended questionnaire allows respondents to express their views without being influenced by the researcher (Sincero, 2012). Using an open-ended questionnaire in this study allowed the respondents ample time to think analytically and critically about the questions and to provide honest answers.

The reason for using both open-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews was that some participants might not be comfortable in expressing their views verbally,

while others may not prefer questionnaires. It was also more suitable to collect data from the citizens using questionnaires, while the semi-structured interviews were effective to collect data from the organisational representatives. Semi-structured interviews allow interviewees flexibility and freedom in deciding what needs to be described, argued, and explained and how much detail to include in their answers (Pathak & Intratat, 2012). The participants could therefore freely express their views concerning the existing mode of communication. A semi-structured interview is an exchange of information between the researcher and the research participant. It is a verbal conversation where the researcher gains new information by asking questions from a questionnaire list, which was arranged and prepared in advance, regarding a specific topic (Longhurst, 2003). The interview may be conducted face to face, where the researcher writes down the impressions or records the interview, or it can be done online, keeping in mind ethical issues (Longhurst, 2003).

To optimise data collection, the researcher provided the questionnaire designed for the semi-structured interviews to the participants, explained to them what it entailed, and requested permission to audio record the interview. The researcher chose to audio record the interviews in order not to feel pressured to write down each word the participants said and to be able to focus on the interaction. As for the Google Forms application, data were collected through a questionnaire shared with interested people.

It is ideal to transcribe interviews the same day on which they were conducted while the researcher still has fresh memories of the discussions. The interviews were transcribed right after they were conducted. The researcher guaranteed the participants their anonymity, as provided for in the cover letter that accompanied the questionnaire.

The questionnaires via Google Forms were used to identify factors that affect effective communication as based on the systems theory. This means that the questionnaire instrument was the basis for collecting, recording, and measuring the data required to provide answers to this study's research questions. Questionnaires are considered good if well designed and distributed (Cameron & Price, 2009). An open-ended questionnaire allows the respondents to express their views without being influenced by the researcher (Sincero, 2012). Reja *et al.* (2003) argued that, with an open-ended

questionnaire, the respondents give their opinions with all the possible details and should feel free to express their thoughts without any restrictions. Open-ended questions may be more complex and should be answered without any pressure. The use of an open-ended questionnaire in this study therefore allowed the respondents to provide honest answers and afforded them ample time to reflect on the questions.

4.8.3 Data analysis

The collected data were analysed using content analysis. Content analysis is a research technique that helps to analyse the actual content of data (Obaid, 2011). According to Krippendorff (2018), content analysis serves to discover the meaning of terms, expressions, and ideas in qualitative data. According to Gill, Stewart, Treasure, and Chadwick (2008), there are several ways to collect data for qualitative content analysis.

The aim of analysing data is to find corresponding topics and to explore how these topics relate to one another (Maree, 2007). To find meaningful patterns in the data, sub-group analysis was used, while enumeration of certain aspects from the questionnaires supported the analysis of the demographic data (Tharyan, 1998). Grolemond and Wickham (2014) argued that data analysis entails the collection, organisation, and interpretation of data, with the aim of drawing useful information from the data. The objective of data analysis is to find the significance of the data, to conclude, to look into a dataset to make conclusions regarding the data, to make decisions, or to expand knowledge on various topics (Calzon, 2021). Data were recorded, transcribed, organised, and then analysed. The data were segmented, and each segment was labelled with a code. The codes were collapsed into themes and each theme was discussed in detail.

Krippendorff (2018) listed six steps that should be followed when conducting content analysis:

- **Design:** The researcher determines the nature of data and analyses the source of the data.
- **Unitising:** The researcher identifies the level at which the data will be analysed and what will later be encoded.

- **Sampling:** The researcher decides what data should be taken into consideration for coding and what not. The selection should be clear and precise.
- **Coding:** The researcher records all relevant collected data and describes it, according to the data obtained from each category of the sample.
- **Drawing inferences:** This step is indispensable in content analysis. After the coding is completed, the researcher draws conclusions from the results obtained from data collection by looking into it according to the research questions.
- **Validation:** This is the final step of content analysis, which seeks to ensure the validity of the analysis by evaluating the accuracy of the results related to all the participants in the study, including the researcher him-/herself.

In this study, the collected data were transcribed, organised, analysed, and evaluated, following the above-mentioned procedures as prescribed for conducting content analysis.

4.8.4 Quality assurance

Golafshani (2003:601) stated that “the most important test of any qualitative study is its quality”. Lincoln and Guba (1985:290) asked in this regard: “How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences that the research findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to?”

Quality assurance in qualitative research relies on validity and reliability. Both reliability and validity concern trustworthiness and “help readers determine how much confidence can be placed in the outcomes of the study and whether they can believe the researcher’s conclusions” (Wimmer & Dominick, 2013:120). The interdependence of validity (rigour) and reliability (trustworthiness) are illustrated by Lincoln and Guba (1985:316) when they remarked that “there can be no validity without reliability, a demonstration of the former [validity] is sufficient to establish the latter [reliability]”.

Qualitative research requires the use of various strategies to increase trustworthiness, since trustworthiness is crucial in research (Golafshani, 2003:601). Trustworthiness, according to Guba (1981:75), answers the question: “How can the researcher persuade others that findings are worth paying attention to?” Guba (1981) argued that

the trustworthiness of a qualitative inquiry can be established by addressing internal and external validity (credibility and transferability), reliability (dependability), and objectivity (confirmability).

The trustworthiness of this study was ensured by adhering to acknowledged standards of internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity:

- Validity refers to the quality of the process and the objectivity of the researcher in collecting and analysing data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Data for this study were collected using two data-collection tools, namely interviews and questionnaires, in order to enhance the validity of the study (Cohen *et al.*, 2011).
- Reliability is defined as the precision and accuracy of the research procedures and the stability of the data (Guba, 1981:86). In order to increase the reliability of this study, each step followed was described in sufficient detail to enable another researcher to repeat the research and, if using the same procedures and criteria, to obtain similar results.
- Objectivity refers to the impartiality of the data that were collected and the analysis procedures followed (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:9). The researcher personally transcribed and analysed the collected data to enhance the validity and trustworthiness of the study.

Quality assurance was also achieved by adhering to all ethical requirements, as follows:

- The researcher had a discussion with each interviewee prior to the interview to explain that they had the right to withdraw from participating in the study at any time they wished.
- They should freely accept to be part of the study, without being forced to do so.
- The researcher ensured the participants that their privacy would be protected and explained the reasons for the interview.
- The researcher took the responsibility to be honest and open with the participants.
- Ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities, Central University of Technology, Free State, before commencing with data collection.

- The online questionnaires were anonymous and no one was forced to participate.

4.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided an overview of the research design and methodology employed by this study with the ultimate aim of addressing the study's main research question.

The chapter discussed the methodology used to conduct the study, including the research paradigm, research design, research method, qualitative research, data collection, and data analysis. The qualitative research approach and interviews and questionnaires as the data-collection methods allowed the researcher to explore and understand the communication challenges between the MMM and its stakeholders.

The results of the data analysis are presented and discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5:

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH RESULTS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This study sought to answer the following main research question:

What will be the most successful communication strategy the MMM and Bloem Water can implement to improve communication between them, and between them and the community, to the benefit of water services delivery to the community of the MMM?

This research question was answered by addressing the following secondary research questions:

- What is the existing mode of communication between Bloem Water and the MMM?
- What are the communication challenges between Bloem Water and the MMM?
- How have the mode of communication and the communication challenges between Bloem Water and MMM impacted water services delivery to the community?
- What is the opinion of members of the community regarding the quality of water services delivery in the MMM?
- What solutions can be implemented to solve the communication challenges between the MMM and Bloem Water, and between the MMM and the community?

This chapter outlines the first and second sections of the emerging findings and themes of the study, as well as the data analysis and a discussion of the results. The study focused on the mode of communication between those responsible for providing water services to the community of the MMM and their stakeholders. This chapter presents the results and findings of the study, which define some performance areas where the MMM is experiencing challenges, and suggests a set of strategies. The findings of this study may be used to contribute to the improvement of communication between the MMM and its stakeholders.

5.2 PART 1: THE MMM COMMUNITY (QUESTIONNAIRES)

The introduction of the questionnaire explained the purpose of this study, namely to investigate the mode of communication that exists between the WSPs in the MMM and the community of the MMM, with the aim to suggest communication strategies that may help the MMM to rebuild trust and a relationship with its community. The participants had to indicate their consent and were ensured that their participation was voluntary and anonymous, and that they could withdraw at any time without penalty.

It is impossible to know how many people received or saw the questionnaire because it was an online form sent out to the community at random via a Google Forms link provided on WhatsApp and email. The target group were people from the Mangaung suburbs considered representative of the MMM community.

The questionnaire stated that the person must be above the age of 18 and must have lived at the same physical address for at least five years. The questionnaire was developed in correlation with the aim of the study in order for the questions to collect objective answers from the respondents.

The survey conducted using a Google Forms questionnaire for the community of the MMM took approximately six weeks to come to completion and 110 valid, completed questionnaires were received. The responses from 110 respondents were evaluated using content analysis.

The research was open to everyone who met the criteria, namely a person above the age of 18 who has lived at the same physical address for more than five years. The selection was random and people answered the questionnaire online.

5.2.1 The respondents' demographic information

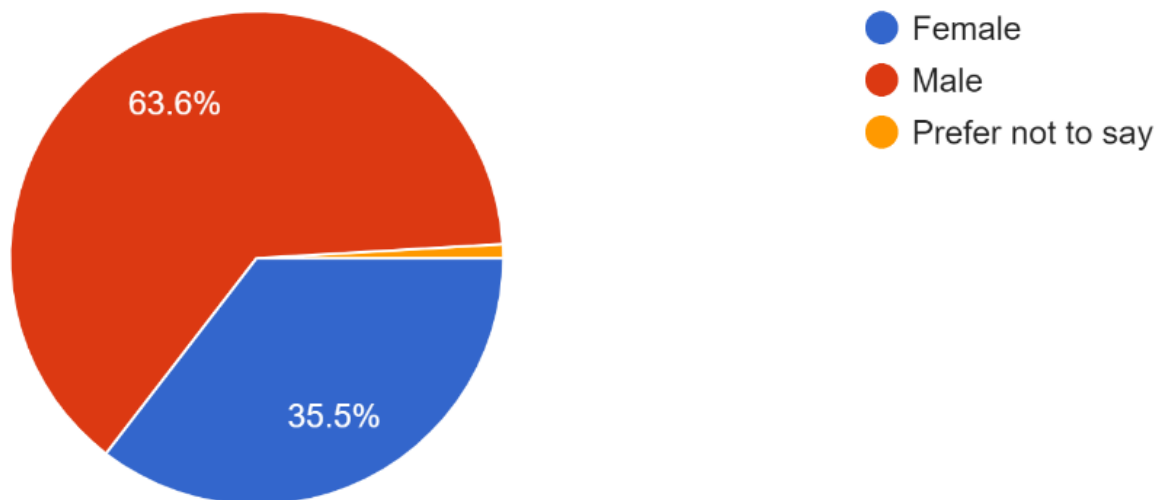
The respondents' consent to participate and detailed illustrations of their demographic information are provided in Appendix 1. Only specific demographic details are discussed next.

Question 1 asked the respondents to indicate their willingness to participate in the research and if they agreed that the information could be used for research purposes.

All the respondents agreed to the question, with only one responding that their responses may not be used.

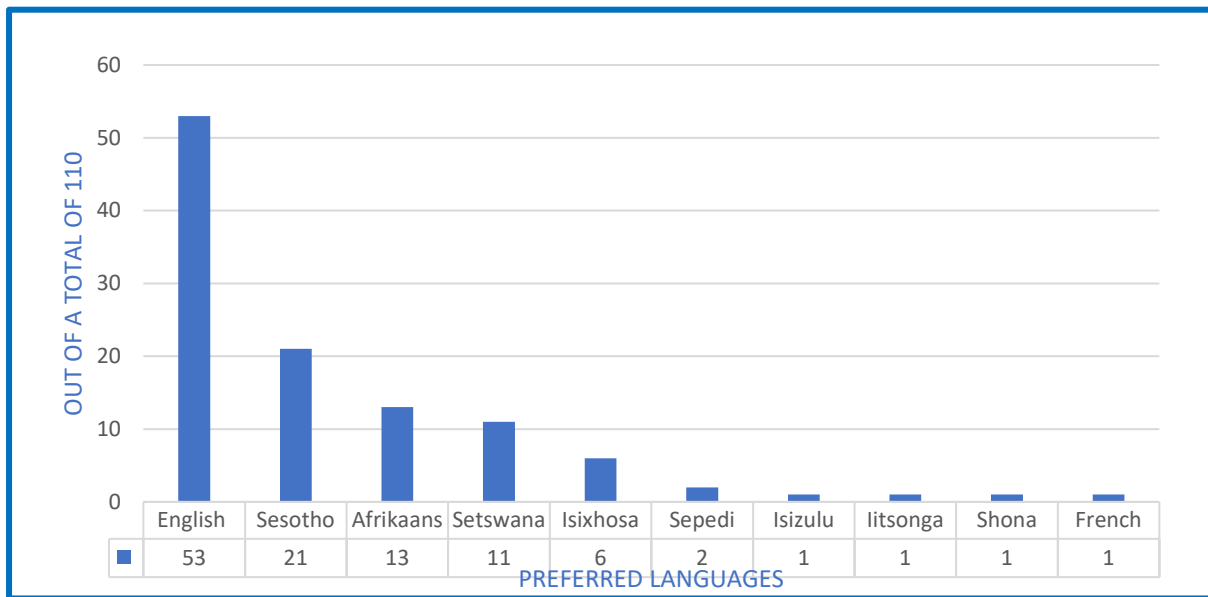
Question 2 asked the respondents to indicate their gender. The results indicated that 63.6% of the respondents were males, 35.5% were females, and one person preferred not to indicate their gender (see Figure 5.1). There seemed to be a gender imbalance among the respondents, but since gender had no influence on the results, this was accepted.

Figure 5.1: Respondents' gender



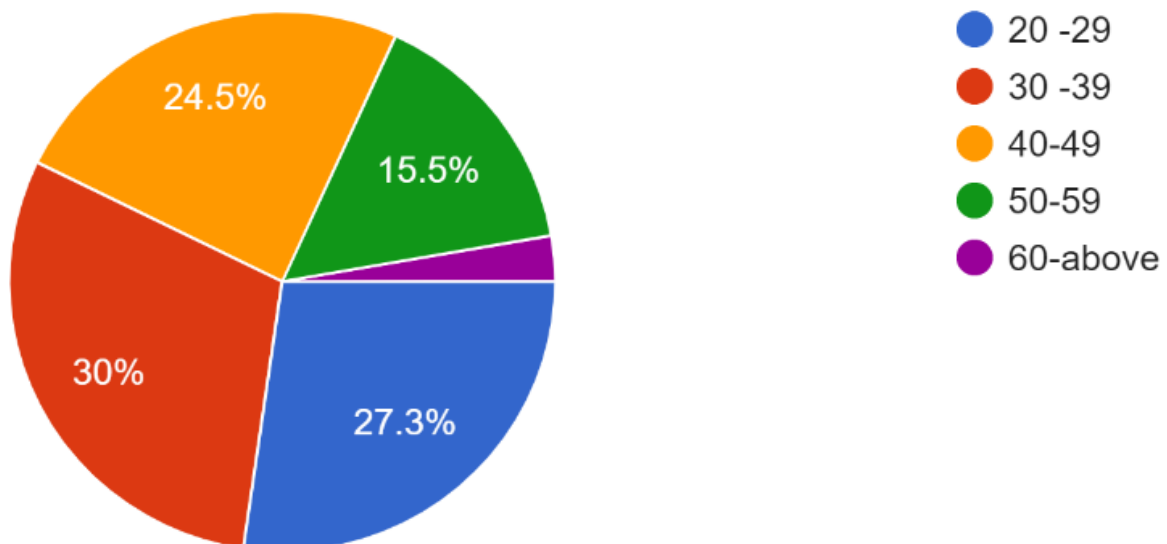
Question 3 asked respondents to indicate their home language. Of the 11 official languages spoken in South Africa, 10 were represented in the study, with English being the most spoken language at 48.2% and Sesotho second at 19.1%. As indicated in Section 2.2, people in the Free State speak mostly English, Sesotho, Afrikaans, and Setswana. The answers to the question are a clear indication of the representativeness of the research sample (see Figure 5.2).

Figure 5.2: Respondents' preferred languages



Question 4 asked the respondents to indicate their age (see Figure 5.3). Almost 55% of the respondents were between 30 and 49 years of age. This is a good representation of the population, as most people in this age group are caring for a family and are mostly the breadwinners as well.

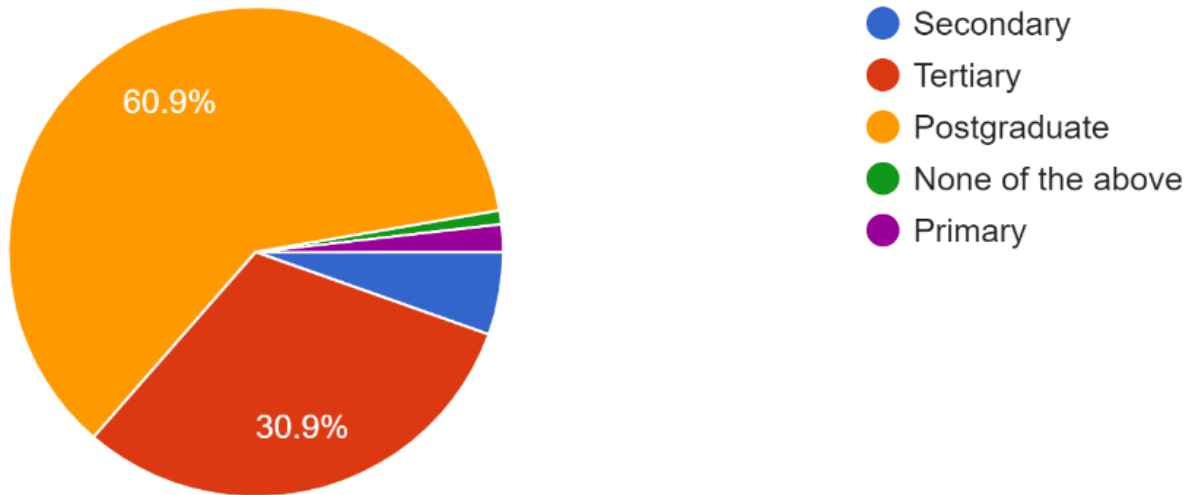
Figure 5.3: Respondents' age categories



Question 5 asked respondents to indicate their level of education (see Figure 5.4). The results reflect that 60.9% of the respondents had a postgraduate qualification and 30.9% had a tertiary education. People with lower levels of education made up the other 8% of the sample. More responses from community members at this level would

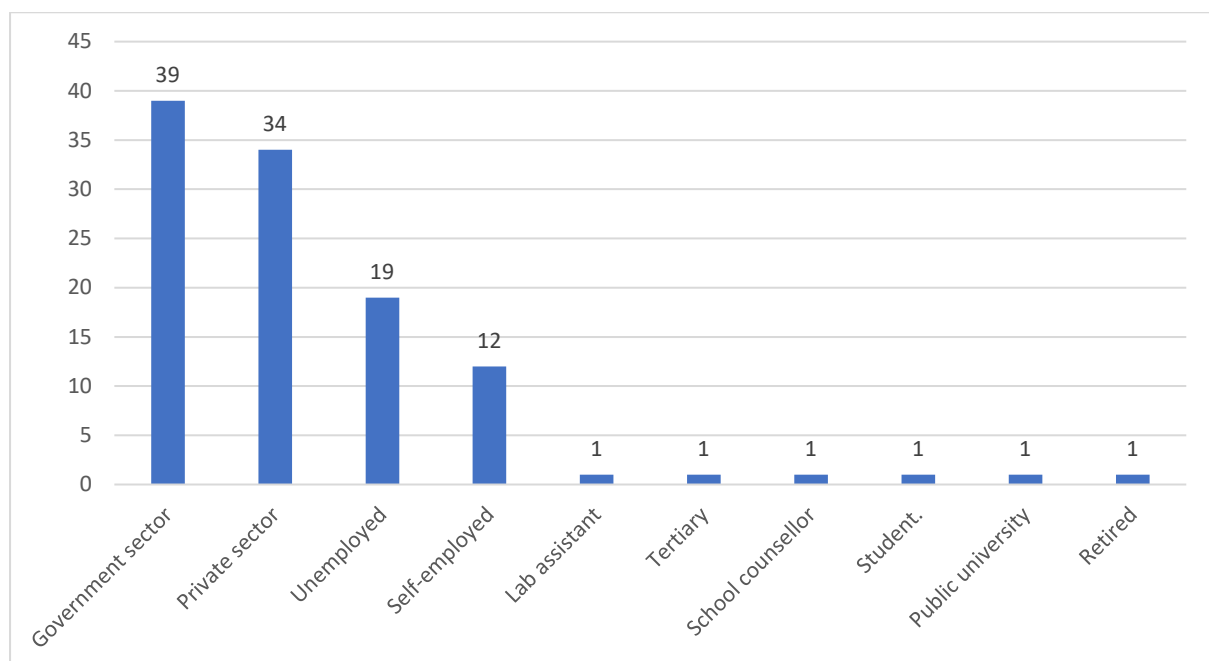
have been welcome, as it is poor people who struggle most with communicating their problems to the MMM.

Figure 5.4: Respondents' level of education



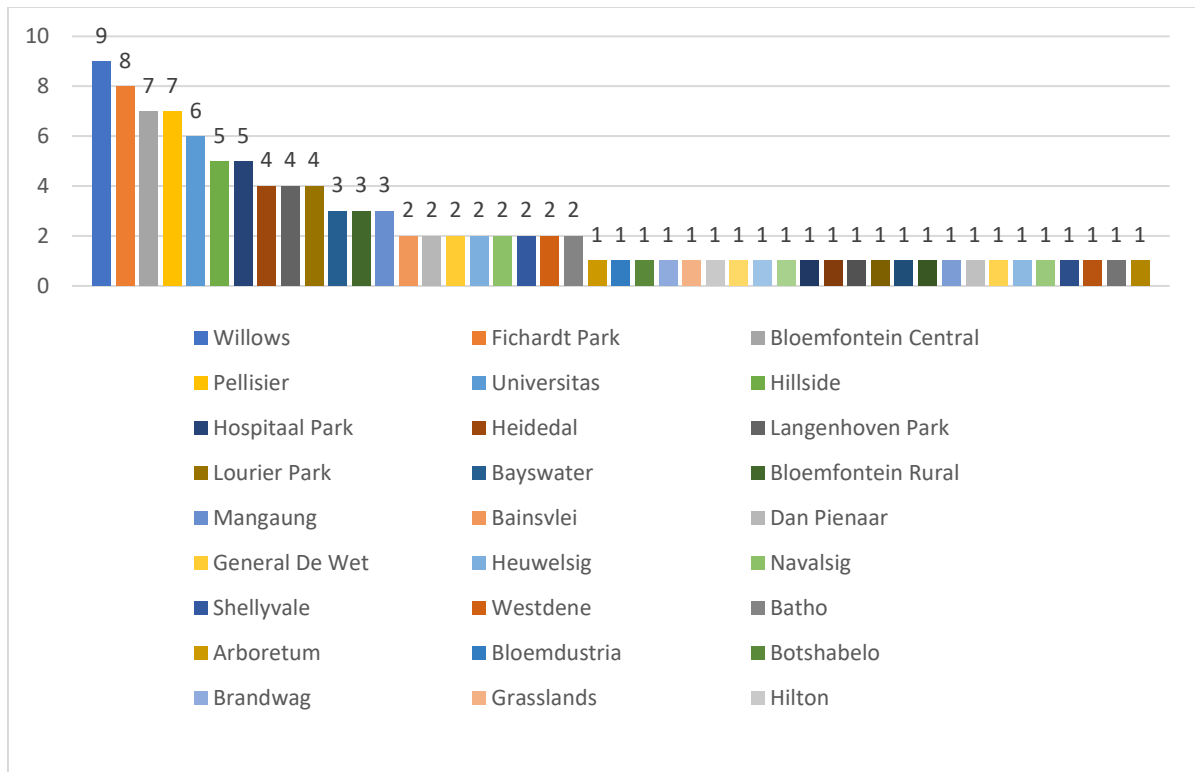
Question 6 asked the respondents to indicate their occupation and employment status. Figure 5.5 illustrates that the majority of the respondents worked in the government sector (39; 35.5%), 34 (31%) worked in the private sector, and five (4.5%) worked in the education sector. Nineteen respondents (17.2%) were unemployed. When compared with Question 5, it indicates that some educated people in the community were unemployed.

Figure 5.5: Respondents' occupation and employment status



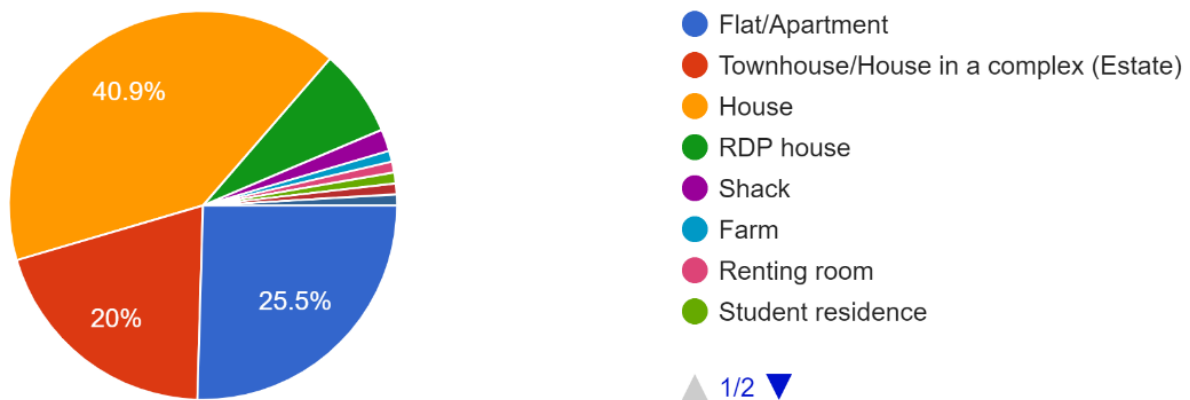
Question 7 asked the respondents to indicate the area or suburb in the MMM in which they live. Eighteen areas in MMM were represented, which is a good distribution of the sample for this study.

Figure 5.6: Most represented areas of the MMM



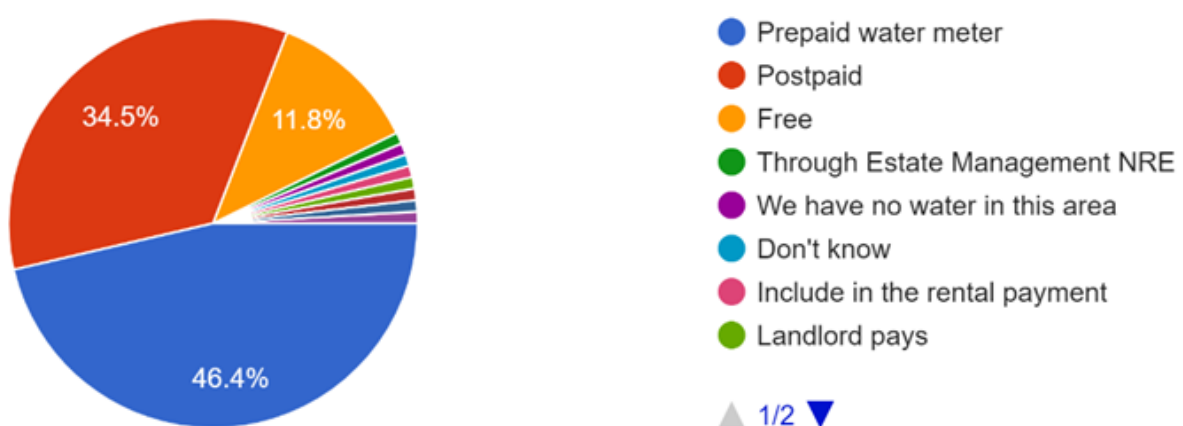
Question 8 asked the respondents to indicate their current residence type. According to the results, as shown in Figure 5.7, the majority of the respondents (40.9%) lived in houses, 20% lived in townhouses, and 27% lived in flats, apartments, or student residences. Only 15% represented the population in lower-level housing; most of whom were also those with a lower level of education (see Question 5) and those who were unemployed (see Question 6).

Figure 5.7: Respondents' residence types



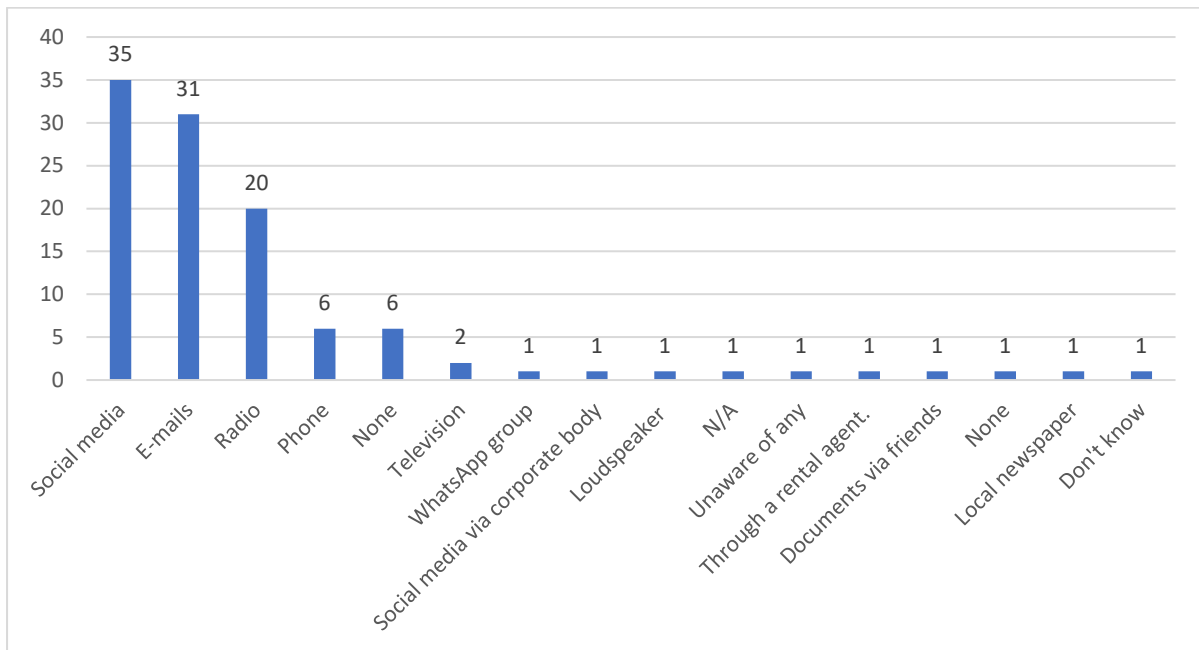
Question 9 asked the respondents to indicate the method they used to pay for water. Most of the respondents (51; 46.4%) used the prepaid method to pay for water, 38 (34.5%) paid upon receiving an invoice (postpaid) from the municipality, and 12 (11.8%) indicated that their water was free. At least 46% of the respondents therefore paid the municipality for water before they could use any water. The respondents were not asked whether they paid regularly (or at all) upon receiving an invoice for their water usage; the researcher thus made the assumption that most people paid as unpaid bills lead to the cutting off of water. The responses indicate that the MMM receives payments for the water its supplies (either from Bloem Water or other sources) into its account.

Figure 5.8: Water payment mode



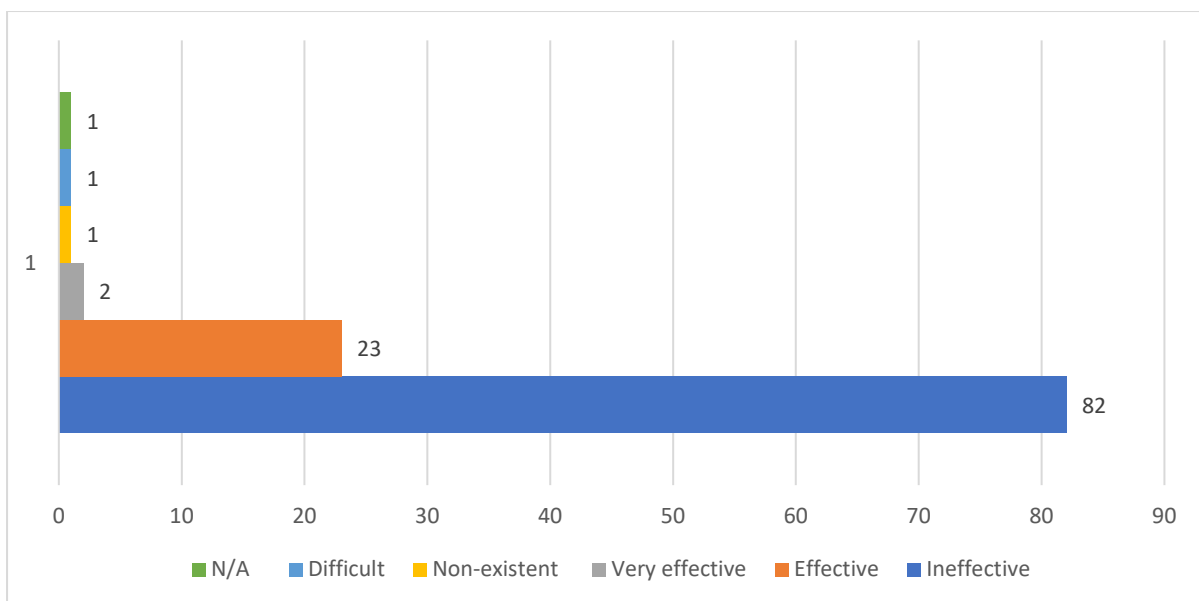
Question 10 asked the respondents to indicate the mode of communication that the MMM uses to communicate with the community. The majority of the respondents indicated that the MMM communicated with them via social media.

Figure 5.9: Mode of communication



Question 11 asked the respondents how effective the communication between those responsible for water and the community was. The responses to this question were overwhelmingly negative: 82 (74.5%) of the respondents indicated that the communication was ineffective, three (2.7%) responded that the communication was difficult or non-existent, and only 25 (22.7%) of the respondents said that the communication was effective.

Figure 5.10: Communication effectiveness



5.2.2 Open-ended questions: Questions 12 to 15

This section discusses the collected and analysed data from the open-ended questions in the questionnaire.

The responses to the open-ended questions were analysed by means of content analysis, as discussed in Chapter 4. The section highlights the general trends of the responses; the detailed responses are attached in Appendix 1.

5.2.2.1 Question 12: General comments on the water services

Question 12 asked the respondents to provide general comments on the water services (including availability, quantity, and quality) provided by the MMM or Bloem Water to the Mangaung community in general, and to their suburb (area) in particular. By using the Word Find and Word Count functions of Microsoft Word, the most used words in the answers were found and listed. These words were coded into four themes, namely (1) availability of water, (2) water quality, (3) water quantity, and (4) price of water (although it was not part of the question, many respondents mentioned the costs). The respondents' answers varied widely and were at times contradictory. The respondents also voiced their frustration regarding other aspects of municipal services that were not asked about, such as broken pipes and lack of service.

(a) Theme 1: Availability of water

The word "availability" appeared 46 times in the respondents' answers, of which 83% used words in their answers such as that water was available "most of the time", "good", "readily", "mostly", "always", "decent supply", "excellent", and "90-95% of the time". Availability was, however, also described as "unavailable", "unpredictable", "cut off without notice", "of low pressure", "periodically unavailable", "scarce", "comes out slowly", and "not good". Water was therefore mostly available, although not always to the same degree. Depending on the area the respondents lived in, they complained about multiple water shortages without any notice from the water provider, irregular water supply, or the total absence of water.

One respondent stated:

“Water availability is pretty unpredictable, as in the past we will be notified on the day when the water will be shut off or even no notification at all. Their timeliness on repairs is usually late, with little to no communication.”

Some of the respondents said that, because of old infrastructure, burst pipes and water shortages were frequent. Others stated that there was no water at all in their areas. These responses are reflected in the following answers:

“Unexpectedly and suddenly without water.”

“They close our water supply almost every week.”

“We use street taps for water.”

Although some respondents were not satisfied with the water availability, most had positive responses. Some of the respondents were completely satisfied with the water availability while others stated that they experienced water shortages only a few times. Water is therefore readily available in most areas of Bloemfontein; however, the problem is the irregularity thereof in some areas and the fact that there are water shortages in some areas when water is cut off without notifying the community. The available water is also sometimes of low quality.

(b) Theme 2: Water quality

Bloemfontein water has a history of containing *E. coli* and, according to Motse (2018), the MMM continues to deny that the water in Bloemfontein is contaminated. Independent tests, however, have indicated significantly high levels of *E. coli* and, additionally, coliform bacteria have been found to be present in the water. Tests revealed that the water in Soutpan is not safe for consumption (Motse, 2018). Because people in Soutpan have fallen ill from drinking water in the past, it is not recommended for consumption. The municipality indicated that people in affected areas should boil water before consumption (Green Overall, 2018). Green Overall (2018) also mentioned that clean water for consumption is becoming more and more scarce, and further stated: “It’s up to everyone to ensure that we do everything within our power to save water, as well as ensure your family is health and safety.” Based on the literature, the question regarding Mangaung’s water quality was inevitable.

The word “quality” was used 83 times in the responses to Question 12, of which 69% of the times the word was linked with descriptions such as “horrible”, “poor”, “not drinkable”, “should improve”, “not good”, “not safe to drink”, “cannot be used for cooking”, “the colour is brownish”, “has a strange taste”, “is high in chlorine”, and “all over questionable”. The other 31% was linked with positive descriptions, such as “good”, “clean”, “available”, “acceptable”, “decent”, and “satisfactory”.

The following verbatim quotations from some of the respondents are representative of people’s general feelings regarding water quality:

“The quality of water in Mangaung generally is bad. This can be proven by establishments of water filtrations systems available in our supermarkets, informal spaza shops, garages.”

“We are paying double for the water because we must buy purified water.”

The indication is therefore that the quality of the water is generally not good.

(c) *Theme 3: Water quantity*

The word “quantity” was mostly used related to the availability of water, with words describing the quantity as “good”, “bad”, “lacking”, “decreased”, and “unpredictable”. Quantity, according to the responses, depended on the area of residence or occasionally the time of the year. Some of the respondents stated that the quantity of water has decreased over time. The following response summarises the quantity and quality of the water in Mangaung:

“The water services are quite good, in a sense that it is always available, the quantity is virtually unlimited since we have it for free. However, the quality of the water is not quite untainted.”

The responses regarding quantity corresponded with the responses in terms of the quality and availability of the water in MMM; although mostly available, the quality of the water is not good.

(d) *Theme 4: Price*

The researcher did not ask about the water price or water affordability; however, the respondents felt the need to mention it, as they saw the survey as an opportunity to

raise their concerns with water services in general. Some of the respondents stated that water is expensive and even when they do not use much water, the bill stays high. The respondents also mentioned that they rather used water from streams or rivers, some found it cheaper to buy clean, filtered water, and some could only use water from a community tap, which was mostly free.

5.2.2.2 Question 13: Main challenges faced when communicating with the MMM or Bloem Water regarding water services

Question 13 asked the respondents to provide comments on the main challenges they faced when communicating with the MMM or Bloem Water regarding water services. As this study sought to investigate the mode of communication used by those responsible for water services and its stakeholders in the MMM, asking this question would help to achieve the goal of the research. Also, with the help of the community, this study can provide suggestions to improve the effectiveness of communication with those responsible for water services. The response rate was 100%, which means all 110 people answered the question, and overall stated that the MMM's communication was ineffective or non-existent. The answers in general were:

“No communication.”

“No response to answers.”

“They cannot communicate.”

“Very poor or very bad communication.”

“Mostly unavailable.”

“They do not reply.”

“There is no one available to interact with.”

“The call centre telephone is never answered.”

“It is not easy to report problems”.

Some respondents said that the officials were unhelpful or gave careless feedback. Some respondents viewed feedback as a problem as they found themselves in a one-

way communication situation. They also indicated complaining about problems but never receiving a response or a solution to their problem. This resulted in frustration, particularly with regard to bills.

The analysis of the responses revealed three main themes: (1) availability of communication, (2) customer service, and (3) effectiveness of communication.

(a) *Theme 1: Availability of communication*

Two-way communication should exist between a municipality and the public it serves. The municipality should have a well-organised customer service department to deal with all matters of concern to customers, and customer demands, needs, complaints, and suggestions. Based on the responses to this question in the questionnaire, it seemed that there was a complete lack of communication between the community and those at the MMM responsible for communicating with the public. Many questions from the community have not been answered. The community is uninformed as to whom they should address their requests, which leads to negative reactions, such as some responses to the question illustrate:

“There is very little and slow feedback when queries are sent to the municipality.”

“Non-existent.”

“None whatsoever.”

“The right people to communicate with are not available.”

“The only communication received is the invoice. No other communication.”

“There is NO way to get hold of them. They do not answer emails or phones.”

“No effect.”

These examples reflect the general responses to Question 13 (see Appendix 1). The communication can be summarised as poor to none.

(b) *Theme 2: Customer service*

When a person who represents the organisation communicates with a customer, there should be an appropriate form of communication between the two, whether it is via emails, telephone, or a person who takes on the role of spokesperson. Unfortunately, this did not seem to be the case when consumers attempt to reach the MMM's customer service department, as indicated by the following responses:

“Call center telephone going unanswered.”

“Not easy to report problems.”

“Calls not attended to.”

“Not available most of the time.”

“Difficulty to pass my message to them.”

“There is no way to get hold of them.”

“They do not answer emails or phones.”

These examples reflect the general responses to Question 13 (see Appendix 1). A call centre as a communication hub between the community and the MMM either does not exist or does not function at all.

(c) *Theme 3: Effectiveness of communication*

According to Juneja (2018), effective communication is part and parcel of any successful organisation. Effective communication entails exchanging clear ideas, opinions, and information. Those responsible for communication should make it easy for the community by organising regular communications and communicating with consumers who require assistance in an open and accessible manner. Whether it is in person or by organising a platform where the community can ask questions or present their requests, those responsible must answer with optimal efficiency.

The majority of the respondents felt that those who are responsible to assist them, have failed them. They felt that there was a lack of concern about their problems but that the MMM was quick to send out invoices. Even in the case of an emergency, some respondents stated that those responsible did not care. Others stated that

officials promised to attend to a problem, but they would either take very long to do so or not do anything at all. Only three respondents who resided in complexes (estates) did not experience communication problems because they communicate via the corporate body or real estate agents. The following respondent statements reflect the ineffectiveness of the MMM's communication:

“Always promising to come and fix everything, but it doesn't come to pass.”

“There is no communication to the MMM.”

“Communication is one-way mainly.”

“There is no proper communication between us and municipality.”

“They respond according to their terms, not to the need.”

“Take extremely long to respond to something like a burst pipe or leaking sewage, resulting in the waste of water and threatening the health of community members.”

“The main challenge is that there is not much of a communication channel.”

“Don't know how to communicate because no one ever answers.”

During the face-to-face interviews conducted with those responsible for communication at the MMM (see Section 5.3.7), they were asked if there was a specific person who represented the community at the MMM. They indicated that there was someone who spoke on behalf of the community and his role was to present the needs or requests from the community to the MMM. The question then arises why is it that when an estate agent, or a member of the Democratic Alliance, or a member of the community police forum goes to the MMM, they receive a response but when consumers go on their own, they encounter obstacles. They do not know to whom they can address their matters to and they get no response.

Regarding communication with and to the public, it is clear from the results that the public is of the opinion that there is no communication at all.

5.2.2.3 Question 14: Causes of communication challenges between the MMM and the community regarding water services

Question 14 asked the respondents to indicate what they thought the causes of the communication challenges between the MMM and the residents were regarding water services. A 100% response rate was obtained for this question. Although the answers to this question were mostly subjective, it could help to identify methods to increase the effectiveness of the MMM's communication with the community. The responses were grouped into the following themes: (1) communication challenges, (2) communication barriers, (3) lack of skills and awareness, and (4) lack of accountability.

(a) Theme 1: Communication challenges

A communication challenge, in general, is due to a lack of communication between the customer and the organisation, a lack of feedback, and a lack of appropriate communication channels. Many respondents indicated that there was no improvement to the water department services, or to technology. They were of the opinion that the MMM's method of communication was outdated, the technology was outdated, the communication channels were inefficient or non-existing, and that there was no feedback. The following are some of the respondents' answers regarding the MMM's outdated and ineffective communication channels:

“The communication channel is not adapted anymore to the current technological progress.”

“The municipality uses radio as a mode of communication, which isn't effective to all residents.”

“Limited communication channels with the community.”

“Communication channels such as complaints telephone numbers or emails do not serve their purposes.”

“Because the municipality doesn't have any communication with us and we also don't know who to call if we have a challenge with water.”

“The community might not be aware of the right communication channel to use.”

These examples highlight the general opinion regarding the communication channels used by the MMM, namely that they are either outdated or ineffective in serving their intended purposes, which leads to challenges in effective communication with the residents.

(b) *Theme 2: Communication barriers*

A few of the characteristics of a communication barrier is not listening to others, the style of communication, the attitude towards one another, lack of attention and interest, or distractions (Eisenberg *et al.*, 2013). The responses indicated communication barriers, which included language barriers, cultural differences, mistrust due to a previous lack of communication, political interference, and corruption. These are aspects addressed in the data collected from the community (see Appendix 1).

Responses regarding language barriers are as follows:

“Aba sazisi nge xesha [They don’t communication with us in time].”

“Ha ba tle matlong a rona ba tlo re tsebisa ha ba tlo kwala metsi. [They don’t come to our area to notify us when they shut off the water supply].”

“Hulle vat ons nie kop toe, ons wat in die lokasie bly, ons hoor net dat die water toe is [They don’t take us seriously as residents who are staying in the township. We just hear that the water has been shut off without any notification].”

Responses regarding political barriers and corruption are as follows:

“Poor governance and accountability issues in local government, for example, employees start work at 9h00 am and by 11h00 am they knock off.”

“Employment of friends and families who lack the technical knowledge, skill and expertise necessary to perform core operational and financial functions.”

“Another issue is the high level of political interference and corruption, which leads to tension within municipalities.”

“Cadre deployment and corruption.”

“Corruption.”

“Is it bigger than us... Politics?”

These responses illustrate frustration regarding the barriers to effective communication, which make people feel powerless.

(c) *Theme 3: Lack of skills and awareness*

The third theme that emerged from the analysis of the respondents' answers to the questionnaire was a lack of skills and awareness among MMM officials. The respondents felt that because the MMM has a monopoly on water services, the officials do not have any pressure to do their work. They do not consider the complaints of their clients, which leads to poor service delivery. Furthermore, a lack of urgency from the municipality, inadequate planning, poor management, and lack of clear communication strategies hinder effective communication. The following comments illustrate the lack of skills and awareness that the respondents thought might be the reason for the MMM's poor communication:

“Maybe the people in charge of the communication at the municipality side have not upgraded their skills or are not aware of what is needed on the resident side.”

“The municipality facility and employees are not well equipped with the modern technology for effective communication.”

“I think that not everyone at the municipality is well versed in their roles or responsibility.”

“Their services are very poor and unreliable. We are not even updated who to report to.”

“Stakeholders at the municipality not being competent to be pro-active.”

“The communication platforms may cause challenges, because not all people trust social media, [the MMM must] at least use more effective platforms like emails.”

These examples highlight that the individuals in the MMM who are responsible for communication lack the necessary skills, awareness, and competence to effectively engage with residents and to utilise modern communication methods.

(d) *Theme 4: Lack of accountability*

Accountability includes aspects such as transparency, timeliness, and solving bureaucracy problems. Delayed notifications and incomplete information dissemination were reported, which indicates a problem with keeping residents informed and updated in a timely manner. Bureaucratic processes and red tape can slow down communication and decision making. Lack of transparency and delayed or incomplete information dissemination can create mistrust and hinder effective communication. The following responses illustrate these aspects:

- **Lack of transparency**

“The municipality does not listen to the needs of residents and the information that the municipality is giving to the residents only gets to a few people, not all.”

“Problem is bigger than anticipated and [the MMM] does not want to let the public know the full extent of the issue.”

- **Lack of timeliness**

“Delayed notification after water interruption.”

“The slow response in resolving the problem.”

“Message is not provided in time.”

- **Bureaucracy**

“Poor governance and accountability issues in local government, for example, employees start work at 9h00 am and by 11h00 am, they knock off.”

“Municipality under admin[inistration].”

“They don't take the residents seriously.”

These examples highlight that the MMM's communication lacks transparency, there are no timely updates, and the communication is hindered by bureaucratic processes, which lead to challenges in effectively informing and engaging with residents.

The causes of the communication challenges between the MMM and the residents regarding water services were thus that communication channels are outdated or non-

existent, communication barriers are not addressed, and staff are ineffective and not aware of their duties.

5.2.2.4 Question 15: Respondents' suggestions on how to improve communication regarding water services between the MMM and the residents

Question 15 asked the respondents to provide suggestions on how to improve communication between the MMM and the residents regarding water services. The majority of the respondents wanted trained, dedicated customer care staff and effective two-way communication. Four themes emerged from the responses to the question, namely (1) improved communication channels, (2) trained and competent officials, (3) timely and transparent communication, and (4) feedback and engagement.

(a) Theme 1: Improved communication channels

The first theme indicated a clear need for improved and effective communication channels (working telephone numbers, email, social media platforms, and radio broadcasts), and in areas where loudspeakers are used to inform people of water problems, it should be done in time to allow residents to gather water. Some of the recommendations were as follows:

“Working telephone numbers, email, social media platforms (Twitter/Facebook/WhatsApp).”

“They should be more active on social media.”

“Provide clear communication channels for enquiries and emergencies.”

“Use all platforms such as SMS, emails, social media, to communicate with the Mangaung residents.”

“WhatsApp and loudspeaker.”

(b) Theme 2: Trained and competent officials

Eighteen of the 110 responses specifically asked for trained or competent staff to improve the MMM's communication and to address the communication challenges.

These responses highlight the importance of skilled and knowledgeable personnel to handle communication effectively within the MMM. The following responses illustrate these suggestions:

“Dedicated and trained people must be there to manage all the possible communication channels.”

“The employees must get proper training in every department.”

“Ward councillors should be mandated for communication.”

“Proper staffing of contact centres and timely response to problems.”

“Personnel to be equipped/trained to communicate with the residents.”

These answers correspond with Theme 3 of Question 14, where the respondents mentioned the lack of trained staff. It is therefore clear that the respondents were of the opinion that the MMM’s staff lacked the necessary skills and competencies to communicate effectively.

(c) *Theme 3: Timely and transparent communication*

More than 20 responses referred to the importance of timely and transparent communication. These responses emphasised the need for clear and regular communication, timely updates, and transparent information sharing to address communication challenges and to improve the relationship between the MMM and the residents. This is illustrated by the following responses:

“Mangaung Municipality must avail themselves in community meetings and communicate more via radio stations.”

“Notifications can be sent to people’s phones like they did when COVID-19 started.”

“There should always be updates.”

“Reach out and know the needs of the people and the quality of water that the municipality supplies.”

“Each and everybody must be accountable on his/her area of responsibility.”

“Letter of information a week before.”

“They must notify us on time in our location as residents.”

“They must come to our township during communication.”

The responses to Questions 13 and 14 show that the respondents felt that there was a total lack of communication between them and the MMM regarding water services. Timely and transparent communication via the correct channels can solve the problem.

(d) Theme 4: Feedback and engagement

Twenty-three responses specifically indicated the importance of feedback and engagement as a way to improve communication. These responses highlight the value of two-way communication, involving residents in decision making, and creating platforms for residents to provide and receive feedback to increase communication with the MMM. The following responses illustrate the need for feedback and engagement:

“Audit their current communication strategy.”

“Phone calls.. sms... pamphlets.”

“Have a tracking system to monitor how fast the queries are attended to.”

“Ward councillors should be mandated for communication. They should provide feedback on challenges all the time.”

“Call centre must be maintained.”

“Read the emails sent and have clearer methods of communication.”

“Dedicated and supervised helpdesk.”

“Communicate via social media more frequently.”

These themes capture the suggestions and opinions provided by the respondents on how to address communication challenges and enhancing effective communication with residents in the context of the MMM.

Table 5.1 provides a summary of the four open questions and the answers as deduced from the content analysis.

Table 5.1: Communication with Water Service Providers (WSPs) and water services delivery

Question	Responses
Question 12: Please provide comments on the water services (including availability, quantity, and quality) provided by the MMM or Bloem Water to the Mangaung community in general, and to your suburb (area) in particular.	Water is available but of a poor quality, very expensive, while the quantity is not always good.
Question 13: Please provide comments on the main challenges you are facing when communicating with the MMM or Bloem Water related to water services.	Communication is not available, ineffective, and customer services do not function at all.
Question 14: What do you think may be the causes of communication challenges between the MMM and Mangaung residents regarding water services?	Communication channels are outdated and ineffective. Officials lack skills, awareness, and accountability.
Question 15: Please provide any suggestions that can be used to improve communication between the MMM and the residents regarding water services.	Improve communication channels, train officials, and provide timely, two-way, and transparent communication.

The responses provided by the respondents as summarised in Table 5.1 highlight several key themes related to communication challenges and potential improvements in the context of the MMM and Bloem Water. The most important themes that should be addressed are as follows:

- **Improvement of water quality:** The responses underscored critical concerns surrounding water quality and the health-related aspects involved. Although water seems to be mostly available, there are interruptions in service delivery without prior notice. The infrastructure is not maintained, which forms part of the quantity and quality problems.
- **Need for competent staff and training:** Many respondents emphasised the importance of dedicated and trained personnel to manage communication channels effectively. They suggested that competent staff members were crucial to restore trust, respond to queries, and ensure proper communication with the community.
- **Timely and transparent communication:** A significant number of responses stressed the need for timely and transparent communication. The respondents expressed a desire for regular updates, clear information about water

interruptions or maintenance, and a proactive approach to sharing information via various platforms.

- **Feedback and engagement:** Several respondents highlighted the importance of engaging with the community and providing feedback. They suggested mechanisms such as regular meetings, direct communication channels, and involving ward councillors to maintain a continuous dialogue between the MMM and residents.
- **Utilising various communication channels:** There was consensus among the respondents that using diverse communication channels was essential for reaching a wider range of residents. Social media platforms, SMS notifications, radio broadcasts, and other methods were recommended to ensure that information is accessible to everyone and received on time.
- **Addressing service quality and accountability:** Some responses touched on broader issues of service quality, accountability, and proper governance within the MMM. These aspects were seen as integral to effective communication and the overall improvement of water services.

In summary, the residents of Mangaung call for competent staff, transparent and timely communication, community engagement, and a diverse range of communication channels to address challenges and to enhance the effectiveness of communication between the MMM and its residents. These findings suggest a strong desire for improved communication strategies that foster trust, engagement, and accountability.

5.3 PART 2: REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MMM (FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEWS)

The first section of the research results presented the demographic data, response rate, and data analysis and a discussion of the findings of the questionnaire distributed to the MMM community using Google Forms, which received a total of 110 completed questionnaires. The conclusion was made that communication from and with the MMM regarding water services delivery is in serious need of attention and change.

This second part of the study focuses on the presentation and discussion of the findings from the face-to-face semi-structured interviews that were conducted with two stakeholders who work in the Department of Communication at the MMM. This section

does not include a demographic presentation, as the respondents preferred to be anonymous with regard to their personal information. Data were collected face to face and recorded using a voice recording application. Content analysis was conducted on the answers to the research questions. The findings and discussion are based on these collected data.

Members of Bloem Water were also contacted to participate in the research, but even after numerous efforts, the researcher could not find anyone at Bloem Water who was willing to participate in the research. This section therefore reflects only the opinions of MMM personnel.

Twenty-two questions were asked, and most of the questions were answered successfully by the two respondents. This section highlights the general trends of the responses; the detailed, verbatim version of the responses are available in Appendix 2.

Each interview started by asking permission to record the conversation. The respondents were then asked if they were willing to participate. The purpose of the research and the procedure to be followed were explained to each respondent, and both were ensured that they could stop participating at any time if they felt uncomfortable. Only after these formalities were completed to did the researcher commence with the interview.

5.3.1 Question 1: What is the mode of communication at the MMM?

This question was the key question of this research study as it sought to establish the mode of communication used by those responsible for water services. A mode of communication refers to the process of disseminating information from one individual to another or to a group of individuals. Communication may include speaking, reading, listening, writing, visuals, and signing (Shrum & Glisan, 2010). Despite the multiple methods of communication that exist, one mode is far less popular than the others, namely the traditional sender-receiver mode (Broms & Gahmberg, 1983). For an organisation to be successful, the communication should be effective. Internal communication is important as it helps an organisation to achieve its goals, to know what its priorities are, and to facilitate sufficient daily interaction between colleagues and, in doing so, growing the organisation (Yeomans & Fitzpatrick, 2017).

From the responses to this question, it was found that the MMM, as a general method of communicating, uses the common modes of communication utilised in any organisation, namely telephone, email, and meetings for internal communication, and social media for external communication. Additionally, the MMM communicates via radio stations such as the South African Broadcasting Corporation's (SABC) stations and OFM, and television when necessary. The organisation's communication lead takes the initiative to use these platforms to raise awareness of the MMM's activities and initiatives to the broader public.

5.3.2 Question 2: What do you think of the MMM's mode of communication?

The reason for this question was to establish if the MMM united all the elements required for communication to be successful. The researcher wanted to know what those responsible for communication thought about the mode of communication that they have implemented to achieve the MMM's goals. The answers received were as follows:

“Well, it is informative in such a way that even people who are far outside MMM radio stations, they are still getting that information, so even the Department of Water Affairs are still getting information, so it is quite bright.”

“It is effective; it reaches all the relevant stakeholders”.

The MMM respondents both thought that the mode of communication was successful and useful, that it reached those who lived long distances away, and they were satisfied with the MMM's mode of communication.

5.3.3 Question 3: What kind of relationship does the MMM have with Bloem Water?

As the MMM is both a WSA and a WSP, this question was important to establish the impact of another WSP (Bloem Water) that also provides water to the community. However, Bloem Water does so under the authority of the MMM, while the MMM must pay for the 70% water it obtains from Bloem Water (see Section 1.3). As seen in the problem statement, there have been many problems between the two entities. This question sought answers regarding the impact of the dispute on their relationship; interviews with members of Bloem Water would therefore have been ideal.

One of the respondents indicated that the relationship between the two entities was not “*cordial*”, for which the “*decision maker*” and the lack of a “*platform*” were to blame. The other respondent admitted that the communication was important and should be good, but

“between customer and a client or a service provider and a client there will be some hiccups”.

The respondent further reflected on the cost and availability of water. A “*cordial and mutual relationship*” was important, especially because the MMM does not generate money and must find a way of cooperating with Bloem Water as the MMM’s service provider to make water services affordable for everyone.

5.3.4 Question 4: What is the mode of communication between the MMM and the community?

This question was asked to establish the mode of communication from the MMM to the community, and from the community to the MMM. Figure 5.7 indicated that the public felt that there was no or inadequate communication from the MMM. The respondents also indicated that the staff needed training.

The respondents indicated that the MMM used radio, television, and pamphlets to communicate with its community and that “*they [the community] may not be [privy] to some of the internal dynamics, particularly on the issues of budget*”, which indicates that although the MMM is trying to meet the demands of the community, it must “*bridge the gap of understanding between ourselves and to the society or community*”. It is clear that the respondents felt that the MMM was making progress, was constantly changing depending on the situation, and used whatever means it could in order to meet the community’s needs. The respondents did not, however, respond directly to what mode of communication the community used to reach the MMM. The answers seemed vague and were inadequate to answer the question.

5.3.5 Question 5: How do you receive feedback from the community after sending information?

This question was asked to determine whether the MMM received any feedback from the community when it sent out information and to establish if the feedback was

monitored. In the community questionnaire, as discussed in Section 5.2, the respondents were asked how the community got in touch with the MMM. The answers were overwhelmingly negative in that they could not communicate with the MMM, that they never received messages concerning water-related issues, and that they received no answers to their queries. The importance of this question was that it might answer some of the community members' questions on how they can get in touch or communicate with the MMM.

Both the respondents of the MMM indicated that the MMM receives feedback via social media platforms such as WhatsApp or Facebook and via meetings and political leaders. These answers are in direct contrast to the responses received from the community respondents.

5.3.6 Questions 6: How do you know the needs of the community?

This question was asked because the community respondents were very negative about the effectiveness of the communication with the MMM. Only one of the two respondents replied, as follows:

“The community of Mangaung are not quiet people, they always shout out if things don't go their way.”

5.3.7 Question 7: Does the community have a representative who speaks on their behalf to the MMM?

This question was asked to establish whether there is a third party that acts as a mediator between the community and the MMM, a person that may represent the community at the MMM office, who speaks on the behalf of the community in the case of problems, one who follows up on any situation and reports to the community, or a person whom the community can rely on.

According to the MMM respondents, the community has representatives, councillors, and “different stakeholders” to represent them “depending on the subject”. Otherwise the community represented themselves, whereby there would be an MMM representative to interact with the community member, based on the matter at hand.

5.3.8 Question 8: Do you consider language while sending information to the community, as multiple languages are spoken by the MMM community?

Community members in the Free State province represent various races and cultures and speak various languages. This question was asked to determine the MMM's consideration of the language of communication when sending messages or information to the community. One of the communication barriers mentioned by the community respondents was language.

The MMM respondents indicated that they used four official languages in communications, namely Afrikaans, English, Sesotho, and isiXhosa, although Sesotho was recognised as the dominant language. No indication was given regarding the mainly English communication on official statements and invoices.

5.3.9 Question 9: With the evolution of technology, it is easy to communicate via social media; however, there are still many people who do not use social media. How do you communicate with them?

Despite the evolution of technology, many people still do not use social media or do not own a cell phone. Such people may be part of the Mangaung community. This question was asked to identify which mode of communication the MMM uses to communicate with consumers who do not use social media or cell phones.

According to the MMM respondents, they used traditional ways of communication, such as community meetings, or an MMM vehicle that travels through certain areas with a loudspeaker to spread information.

5.3.10 Question 10: How do you get in touch with illiterate people?

This question was asked because the MMM as an organisation has external stakeholders of various cultures, languages, education levels, and races, and all should be treated with an equal amount of consideration.

The MMM respondents said that they communicated with people who are illiterate via radio, public meetings, and councillors who

“also do their part because they are more accessible than any other person, so that closes the communication gap”.

5.3.11 Question 11: Are there precautions that the MMM takes for the future concerning water quality and water shortages?

Water shortages and especially water quality in the MMM were indicated as some of the main problems facing the community. The community respondents indicated that improving the quality of the water would be one of the ways forward for the MMM. This question might provide answers concerning water quality for the near future.

The MMM respondents said that the MMM would be taking preventive measures to guarantee acceptable water quality, as well as to avoid water interruptions, in the future. These measures include communicating with engineers, recycling water, better treatment of recycled water, using water from rivers, and using other forms of natural water.

Making use of natural and recycled water means that the people who

“used to have water cut, there will not be interruptions because there will be substitutions or alternative supply”.

The water thus obtained will also be cheaper. No indication was given if such plans are on the table for the near future.

5.3.12 Question 12: Do you think that the MMM’s communication is effective?

For an organisation to be successful, its communication must be effective both internally and externally, as mentioned in detail at the beginning of this chapter. This question was one of the most important questions to ask both the MMM respondents and the community respondents. It was necessary to ask the MMM respondents this question as they directly manage the communication within the organisation, as well as with stakeholders. Learning what they thought about the effectiveness of their communication was therefore important for this research study. Since community respondents strongly indicated that communication with the MMM was ineffective and non-existent (see Figure 5.10), this question was important.

The MMM communication officers responded that their communication with the community was effective as

“we don’t see a lot of complaints like other cities”.

5.3.13 Question 13: What do you do to improve the communication?

Improving communication should be a daily exercise for any organisation. For a large organisation such as the MMM, it may be difficult at times to manage communication between the internal and external stakeholders. There are some challenges, such as deciding on the optimal strategy to improve the communication in the entity, increasing productivity, engaging in positive team-building activities, etc. All these aspects, as well as the responses from the community that training for staff and updated communication channels were urgently needed (see Question 15 in community questionnaire), were taken into consideration as the motivation for asking this question.

The respondents indicated that they engaged in various efforts to improve the MMM's communication practices, such as participating in different communication forums, seeking feedback from people, and listening to community comments. They highlighted the significance of radio and community media, especially in areas where Sesotho is predominant, as a great deal of information is conveyed through these channels. They also valued traditional media methods; however, they believed that improving access to the Internet would significantly enhance communication. One respondent felt that although they needed to put in more effort,

“our communication is still effective, but I can tell you now that the at level of provinces, we don't have competition”.

5.3.14 Question 14: What are the responsibilities of the Department of Communication at the MMM?

A communication department is usually seen as the face of the company in an organisation as it maintains and presents the image of the company (Markowitz, 2014). This question regarding the responsibilities of the MMM's Department of Communication was asked to identify the role(s) that the department plays.

According to the respondents, their role is to ensure that communication reaches the community around Mangaung and that the community is well informed of events and developments in the Mangaung area. This includes reaching people through various means such as smartphones, radio, and television. The department plays an

advertising role and assists all city departments with communication, including aspects such as branding, advertising, daily communication, handling enquiries, content creation, electronic publishing, and maintaining the institution's image. It also manages external and internal stakeholders to bridge communication gaps.

5.3.15 Question 15: What is the MMM's position on the inadequate infrastructure that is affecting the quality of water and causing water shortages?

Inadequate infrastructure is the cause of water shortages and the poor water quality in most parts of Mangaung. Many of the problems that the MMM is facing presently revolves around old and inadequate infrastructure and to resolve this problem, the MMM should ensure adequate maintenance. This question was asked in order to address some of the community's concerns.

The MMM respondents indicated that the situation with the infrastructure has historical roots; dating back to the apartheid era when the city was much smaller. Efforts have been made to address these infrastructure challenges, such as using durable materials for repairs and ensuring that newly established townships have long-lasting infrastructure. Plans are in place to improve underground water infrastructure, and while the age of infrastructure can impact water quality due to changes in chemicals, as long as the water complies with disinfection and standard regulations, its quality remains acceptable. Occasionally, there might be temporary changes in water colour, but this typically clears up over time.

5.3.16 Question 16: What kind of communication is used to improve the MMM's image among clients that have had negative experiences with Bloem Water and the MMM?

Organisational image depends on the impression that an organisation makes on the community. A positive image means that the organisation has gained its clients' trust and that they feel acknowledged (Markowitz, 2014). The MMM, with all the challenges regarding the quality of its service delivery, particularly when it comes to water services, has lost its image and reputation and should rebuild it to gain the community's trust again. This question sought to identify what the MMM's strategy is to rebuild the public's trust.

One respondent did not answer this question. According to the other respondent, the MMM makes use of radio to clear its name. The MMM wants people to understand that it does not sell water for profit, as is the case for Bloem Water, which is a business. Money is the main reason for the conflict between the MMM and Bloem Water. The MMM wants to improve its image by assisting the community to understand that it is not the enemy; it is merely a WSP and a WSA.

5.3.17 Question 17: The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) has established a set of objectives for itself; do you think that the MMM has reached its goal or is on its way to?

In answering this question, the respondents made it clear that the MMM is an independent entity and therefore does not have to follow orders from other departments, although they acknowledged that the MMM has a common vision with the DWS, which is to deliver quality service. The achievement of the objectives depends on the MMM's initiatives, budget allocations, and collaboration with National Treasury. While some objectives can be pursued directly, intergovernmental relations are crucial for effective planning and coordination. The MMM works with stakeholders, including the national DWS, to develop infrastructure goals and to prioritise quality service delivery. One respondent said that although the MMM may not have achieved its goals, it is making progress, even without sufficient support from the DWS. This lack of support poses a barrier to progress, as one of the respondents pointed out:

“We need assistance from them but if they distance themselves, how are we going to reach some of our objectives without them?”

5.3.18 Question 18: At times the community receives WhatsApp messages from the MMM that inform them of situations that may occur concerning water. How do you communicate with people who do not use the application?

This question sought to establish the levels of communication between the MMM as a WSP and the stakeholders and to determine whether the MMM considered all possible aspects of communication that may exist between it and the community.

The MMM respondents answered that the MMM informed people who do not use WhatsApp or who do not have smartphones via the radio or through ward councillors who organise street meetings and forums to inform the community of any water interruptions that may occur.

5.3.19 Question 19: Did the MMM and/or Bloem Water offer support after members of the population fell ill because of the poor water quality?

This question was asked in order to clarify the rumours and information on the radio from the then Free State Department of Health spokesperson, Mondli Mwambi, who told OFM that Mangaung's water was contaminated by high levels of *E. coli* and coliform bacteria (Motse, 2018) (see Sections 1.2 and 5.2.2.1). Some community members also complained that the water made them ill and cannot be used for human consumption.

According to the respondents, this information was false, especially when people say that something is wrong with the water quality. Water is tested in a laboratory to ensure that it is fit for human use. If not, the MMM sends a notice to the community to add bleach to the water until it clears up. The population does not fall ill as a result of water quality; people store water for long periods in their houses with the idea of being prepared for water interruptions. Storing water for extended periods may affect water quality and may cause health concerns:

“... so the poor quality is due to people who stock water and they don't do precautional remedies to ensure that the water can be utilised.”

“People will see that the quality of water is good, but I must say comparatively, in the Free State, our quality is quite good, you know.”

5.3.20 Question 20: Does the community complain about water quality?

In correlation with the previous question, this question was asked to establish if the MMM was aware of the community's dissatisfaction with the quality of the water.

According to one MMM respondent, people complain about water quality when there is a leak from a burst pipe, which mostly means that the water will be brown for a short time. The respondent added:

“The issue around E. coli in the water is well managed, I must say.”

The other respondent’s opinion was as follows:

“Yes, of course; people will forever complain about water quality if they don’t know who is actually supplying water, especially in the area where a pipe bursts. Yes, they will, especially during drought season, whereby we are now treating humic acid, which is mostly about adjustment. Instead of giving people nothing, we rather giving them water and making them aware that this water has only a bad smell of beetroot. Not all of us like beetroot; even if you boil that water, you cannot kill the smell.”

It can thus be deduced that people do complain, that they are aware of the possibility of *E. coli* in the water, that “the people supplying the water” is to blame, and that the water is sometimes brown and may even smell very bad.

5.3.21 Question 21: What do you think about the relationship between the MMM and the community?

This question was asked to identify what type of relationship the respondents thought existed between the MMM and the community, given the complaints of the community as reflected in the community survey’s responses (see Section 5.2).

According to one respondent, the communication with the community is not inadequate, although the MMM knows people are sometime unhappy. Since the MMM constantly communicates with the community and continuously informs them of matters that are occurring in the MMM, the communication is considered good. Municipalities are the closest government level to the people; people therefore complain to them. Basic services such as electricity and water are delivered, although there might be occasional issues with waste collection. The relationship with the community is seen as a partnership with mutual care for the city.

5.3.22 Question 22: What kind of complaints are received from clients?

This question is linked to Question 20, which asked whether the community complained about water quality, and aimed to establish if the community complained

about other aspects as well. The other purpose of the question was to determine if the MMM responded to community complaints.

To this question, the respondents indicated that many complaints mainly revolve around basic services such as water schedules, meter malfunctioning, waste collection, pipe bursts, and water tank availability. Issues with prices, rates, and taxes are common, but

“unfortunately it is something beyond the control of the municipality because that is through the legislation. Then other structures of government that are, for example, responsible for electricity through NERSA, determine the tariffs”.

The respondent further stated:

“Where there is a community, you will get complaints because it is not an ideal situation. Unfortunately we are still a developing country.”

5.3.23 Summary of responses

The 22 questions discussed above were asked during face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with two members of the Department of Communication at the MMM. All their verbatim responses are presented in Appendix 2. Table 5.2 provides a summary of the MMM representatives’ opinions and answers to the questions.

Table 5.2: Answers obtained from the MMM respondents

Questions asked	Answers given
Question 1: What is the mode of communication at the MMM?	Telephone, email, and meetings for internal communication, and social media, radio stations such as SABC stations and OFM, and television for external communication.
Question 2: What do you think of the MMM’s mode of communication?	It is effective and reaches all stakeholders.
Question 3: What kind of relationship does the MMM have with Bloem Water?	The relationship is not <i>“cordial”</i> , for which the <i>“decision maker”</i> , the lack of a <i>“platform”</i> , and the cost and availability of water are to blame.
Question 4: What is the mode of communication between the MMM and the community?	The MMM uses radio, television, pamphlets, and <i>“what means they can”</i> .
Question 5: How do you receive feedback from the community after sending information?	Via social media platforms such as WhatsApp or Facebook, or via meetings and political leaders such as ward councillors.

Questions asked	Answers given
Questions 6: How do you know the needs of the community?	<i>"The community of Mangaung are not quiet people, they always shout out if things don't go their way."</i>
Question 7: Does the community have a representative who speaks on their behalf to the MMM?	The community has representatives, councillors, and "stakeholders" to represent them, or they represent themselves.
Question 8: Do you consider language while sending information to the community, as multiple languages are spoken by the MMM community?	The MMM uses four languages in its communications, namely Afrikaans, English, Sesotho, and isiXhosa.
Question 9: With the evolution of technology, it is easy to communicate via social media; however, there are still many people who do not use social media. How do you communicate with them?	To reach people without access to social media, the MMM uses traditional ways of communication, meetings, or an MMM vehicle that travels through areas with a loudspeaker to spread information.
Question 10: How do you get in touch with illiterate people?	Via the radio, public meetings, and ward councillors.
Question 11: Are there precautions that the MMM takes for the future concerning water quality and water shortages?	Communicating with engineers, recycling water, better treatment of recycled water, and using water from rivers or natural sources.
Question 12: Do you think that the MMM's communication is effective?	The communication with the community is effective and the MMM does not receive many complaints.
Question 13: What do you do to improve the communication?	Participate in communication forums, seek feedback from people, listen to community comments, and use the radio, community media, and traditional communication methods. Access to the Internet would significantly enhance communication.
Question 14: What are the responsibilities of the Department of Communication at the MMM?	To ensure that communication reaches the community and that the community is well informed of events and developments.
Question 15: What is the MMM's position on the inadequate infrastructure that is affecting the quality of water and causing water shortages?	The problems with the infrastructure dates back to the apartheid era when the city was much smaller. Efforts are in place to address the infrastructure challenges.
Question 16: What kind of communication is used to improve the MMM's image among clients that have had negative experiences with Bloem Water and the MMM?	The MMM uses radio to clear its name. It tells people that the MMM does not sell water for profit, like Bloem Water does.
Question 17: The DWS has established a set of objectives for itself; do you think that the MMM has reached its goal or is on its way to?	The MMM is an independent entity that does not have to follow orders from other departments, although it acknowledges that it has a common vision with the DWS. A lack of support from the DWS, however, poses a barrier to progress.
Question 18: At times the community receives WhatsApp messages from the MMM that inform them of situations that may occur concerning water. How do you communicate with people who do not use the application?	People are informed via the radio or through ward councillors, who organise street meetings and forums.

Questions asked	Answers given
Question 19: Did the MMM and/or Bloem Water offer support after members of the population fell ill because of the poor water quality?	The respondents denied that something was wrong with the water quality and blamed people falling ill on them storing water for long periods of time.
Question 20: Does the community complain about water quality?	People complain, but the drought and <i>“the people supplying the water”</i> are to blame. They admitted that the MMM was aware of the possibility of <i>E. coli</i> in the water, that water was sometimes brown, and sometimes smelled bad.
Question 21: What do you think about the relationship between the MMM and the community?	As the MMM constantly communicates with the community, the communication is considered good. People are unhappy and complain to the MMM about things that the government should handle.
Question 22: What kind of complaints are received from clients?	Complaints revolve around basic services such as water schedules, meter malfunctioning, waste collection, burst pipes, water tank availability, and prices, rates, and taxes.

From Table 5.2 it can be deduced that the methods used by the MMM to communicate with the community are via telephone, email, social media, radio stations, television, pamphlets, traditional meetings, loudspeaker-equipped vehicles, stakeholders, ward councillors, and politicians.

It is clear that the respondents were of the opinion that the communication with the community is effective, that the MMM uses all means available to communicate in time in four languages, that it responds to feedback and complaints, and felt that engagement with the community was very important. Complaints revolve around basic services such as water schedules, meter malfunctioning, waste collection, burst pipes, water tank availability, and prices, rates, and taxes, which provide insight into the challenges faced by the community and focus areas for improvement. For most of these complaints the response was that the community always complains and that the government, the DWS, the water suppliers, lack of Internet access, lack of support, apartheid, and a lack of money were to blame for the problems.

The responses from the community, as summarised in Table 5.1, highlight that the community felt that the quality of the water was mostly not good, that the communication by the MMM was poor or non-existent, and that it was impossible to communicate with the MMM. The community respondents indicated that the MMM officials responsible for communication needed training, that they used outdated

communication methods, and that the MMM did not use all available communication channels to communicate with the community. It is important to note that these responses were the direct opposite of the responses received from the MMM respondents.

The answers to the questions asked to the MMM respondents regarding the relationship with Bloem Water indicated that the relationship was not good. They were of the opinion that the problems existed because Bloem Water sold water for a profit and was responsible for the poor quality of the water. Better conclusions could have been drawn if members of Bloem Water could also have been interviewed.

5.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter consisted of two parts. The first part discussed the results from the survey conducted among community members regarding the communication challenges they experienced with the MMM. Qualitative data were collected from 110 participants from the Mangaung suburbs, who had lived at the same physical address for at least five years, using a questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. The chapter discussed the results and emerging findings as themes, which were linked to performance areas where the MMM is experiencing challenges, and suggested a set of strategies to address these challenges.

The second part comprised a discussion of the responses to the semi-structured interviews, which were conducted with two representatives of the MMM. Most of the study's research questions were answered.

The following chapter contains the study's conclusion and recommendations. It presents a summary of the entire study and explains whether the aim and objectives of the study were achieved.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The research problem identified by this study led to the following research question:

What will be the most successful communication strategy the MMM and Bloem Water can implement to improve communication between them, and between them and the community, to the benefit of water services delivery to the community of the MMM?

This research question could be answered by resolving the following secondary research questions:

- What is the existing mode of communication between Bloem Water and the MMM?
- What are the communication challenges between Bloem Water and the MMM?
- How have the mode of communication and the communication challenges between Bloem Water and MMM impacted water services delivery to the community?
- What is the opinion of members of the community regarding the quality of water services delivery in the MMM?
- What solutions can be implemented to solve the communication challenges between the MMM and Bloem Water, and between the MMM and the community?

A summary of the findings, an overall conclusion, and recommendations to improve communications constitute this last chapter. The research focused on the mode of communication between those responsible for water services and their stakeholders in the Mangaung area.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the key objective of the MMM is to provide the community with basic services, to ensure the safety of the environment, and to ensure that the services are affordable for the community. All of this may be achieved with an effective communication strategy, both within the organisation and externally. This research

found that there is a significant communication gap between the water sector and its consumers, water delivery is poor due to old and unmaintained infrastructure, and water shortages and low pressure in parts of the MMM are regular occurrences. According to the majority of the community respondents, they do not receive notice before water is cut off or interrupted. The community respondents rated the water services delivery as poor and the communication with the MMM as non-existent. The MMM respondents indicated that the communication with stakeholders was good and that the problems with service delivery was not the MMM's fault.

6.2 SUMMARY RELATED TO THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This section discusses how the study's research objectives were achieved.

6.2.1 Research Objective 1: To investigate the existing channels of communication between the MMM and Bloem Water

The study found that there was indeed a channel of communication between the water service sector entities and they communicate through different platforms. According to the findings, a few issues exist between the MMM and Bloem Water. The issues mainly relate to delayed payment from the MMM to Bloem Water as the MMM does not pay Bloem Water within the given time period as agreed upon. Bloem Water therefore lowers the water pressure of the water, provided on behalf of the MMM, or it may cut off the water supply, as a result of overdue payments. The major issue that causes the conflict is poor communication between the WSA and the WSP. An appropriate communication strategy should be crafted for the MMM and Bloem Water to resolve the issue internally and ensure that the community is not affected by the conflict between the two entities.

6.2.2 Research Objective 2: To explore the existing communication framework within each entity operating in the MMM water sector; e.g., Bloem Water, the MMM, and the DWS

The existing mode of communication between the water sector entities of Mangaung is not a positive form of communication. The decision maker has not created a platform to ensure that the relationship between those responsible for water and its stakeholders is positive. According to the findings, the MMM, as a Category A

municipality, does not rely on the DWS. It is independent and makes its own decisions regarding service delivery, while complying with the objectives that the DWS has in place. According to the findings, the MMM fails to follow the steps to achieve the objectives set in place by the DWS, as the MMM does not have sufficient resources to serve the community as expected. It is doing its best as an independent organisation but its failure to deliver on its mandate is the result of the failure to ensure that payments are made on time to Bloem Water.

6.2.3 Research Objective 3: To explore the existing mode of communication between the MMM, the water supplier, and the communities

The results indicated that the majority of the community respondents considered the MMM's communication as ineffective. The community is uninformed as to whom or where to complain when a situation inconveniences them. There is a serious lack of communication between the water stakeholders and their customers. More than 65% of the respondents complained about the poor communication experienced by those responsible for water. The community does not know to whom they can address their concerns and they do not feel considered. For those responsible for the water services to regain their customers' trust, they should create a platform where they can seriously take into consideration the customers' opinions. They should listen to them and be in constant communication with their communities. They should take care of their external image by implementing an efficient communication strategy that will allow them to rebuild the trust between them and the community.

6.2.4 Research Objective 4: To advise on an improved communication strategy for water services delivery

The findings from the community survey indicated that water services delivery was poor for the majority of the community. The advice is therefore for the WSP and WSA to consider the option of creating a strong platform both externally and internally that may reinforce the relationship between the organisations, as well as with their community. Correct information should be disseminated at the appropriate time to avoid confusion, as well as to ensure that everyone is taken into consideration. The evaluation of feedback may make a significant difference if the entities take the time

to listen to the community's enquiries. Feedback should be encouraged, and follow-ups should be made in significant situations.

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

All parties engaged in representing water services or service delivery in the Mangaung area should work together to reach the goals agreed upon. The following are some recommendations that the researcher makes, based on the results and data collected, to the water service representatives to improve their communication gaps and challenges, for their own benefit, as well as for the benefit of their stakeholders:

- Cooperation and effective communication should be key in going forward for a better future.
- An effective communication strategy should be a priority to reinforce the achievement of set goals.
- An evaluation of how the lack of communication affects both the water representatives and the customers should be conducted in an effort to improve communication.
- Reinsuring the community by finding a strategy to regain their trust, and by bringing a solution on all unsolved problems or situations raised by the community.
- Develop a marketing protocol communication service that will be in charge of communications to improve their image among the customers.
- Consider employing qualified and competent staff who are able to devise a more efficient plan or strategy of communication and to build a welcoming environment for more effective communication.
- Improve quality management.
- Specify their objectives in each service delivery aspect.
- Review the quality of the information provided.
- Improve the quality control of the water infrastructure.
- Reinforce information on all ongoing situations that may affect service delivery, and make it available on multiple platforms, so that the community may be informed in a timely manner.

- Reclassify priorities by putting the community first; for example, revising the criteria for customer appointments will be a significant step to improve their image.

Given the negative impact that schedule constraints may have on the projected water quality and water pressure, careful considerations were made in this exploratory research study. There may be numerous proposed topics for further exploratory studies concerning the MMM's service delivery, or exploring a larger area than that of the MMM in the future. This research provided the opportunity for the community of the MMM to express themselves freely on their opinions regarding the quality of the MMM service that they have been receiving all these years. Further research on how to rebuild the MMM's image among its customers should be conducted.

This research pointed out some strategies that may be used to improve the quality of the communication, internally and externally, between the representatives of MMM and their stakeholders.

At the beginning of this research study, interviews were planned with some of the employees of Bloem Water as it is the WSP in some areas of Mangaung. They were contacted on several occasions, telephonically, via email, and physically, to participate in a semi-structured interview or to respond to a questionnaire via Google Forms. However, these attempts were in vain as no feedback from the Bloem Water officials was received. The researcher visited Bloem Water's offices on 18 August 2022 in order to have a face-to-face interaction to ask for assistance with this research. A few staff members of the Department of Communication assisted the researcher in terms of how to proceed in order to obtain feedback for the study. The researcher submitted the semi-structured interview guide upon their request and received a few of their phone numbers and email addresses. However, no feedback was ever received from anyone at Bloem Water. The researcher wrote an email reminder to those responsible for communication on 1 September 2022; however, there was still no feedback. On 20 September 2022, the researcher made a telephone call to a staff member of the Department of Communication. They provided an email address to which the researcher could forward the same email, and she did so immediately. On 22 September 2022, the same email was resent to all the contacts received, but they failed to respond. The researcher continued sending emails and WhatsApp messages

and making telephone calls; however, all these efforts were fruitless. The researcher therefore did not obtain any feedback from Bloem Water, as planned at the beginning of this research study.

Regarding the nature of the study, which was exploratory, the sample size was limited, as it was a case study that focused only on the MMM. Further research, which should be conducted with a larger sample size, is necessary to observe how the results may be used for other organisations' communication regarding service delivery.

The contribution to knowledge by this research centres around effective communication between corporates and their customers. The suggestions of this study can be extended to other sectors where there are challenges related to effective communication between corporates and their customers regarding service delivery.

6.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented a summary of the study's findings. It highlighted the objectives of the study and presented recommendations for proposed future research in terms of improving the mode of communication between the local government and the community. The poor relationship between the local government and the community was due to the lack of communication from the MMM to its community, where the community felt that the MMM did not respond to their needs. The chapter also discussed the obstacles the researcher encountered in attempting to obtain research participants from Bloem Water in order to gain their opinions regarding its partnership with the MMM and the community.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Survey for the community of the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality

The purpose of this study is to investigate the mode of communication that exists between the responsible water service providers in the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality (MMM) and the community of the MMM.

It is known that in the MMM, water provisioning, in terms of quality and regularity, has been facing challenges for quite some time. Due to these challenges, the community of the MMM is affected and have developed a negative image of the MMM. This negative image boils down to communication challenges.

It is my hope that, at the end of this research, I may be able to suggest a few communication strategies that may help the MMM to rebuild trust and a relationship with its community.

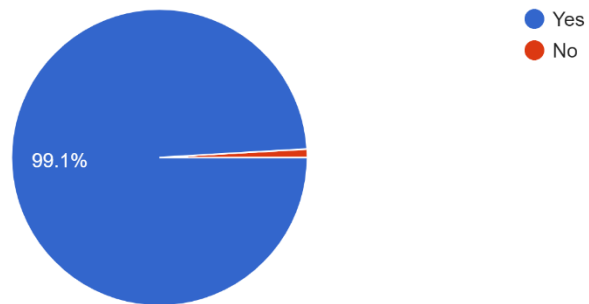
Participant consent

I have read (or had it explained to me) and understood the study, as explained in the information sheet. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty. I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publication(s), and/or conference proceedings. I am fluent in English and understand these documents or I have had the information explained to me in a language that I understand well.

A) Close-ended questions and responses as collected via Google Forms

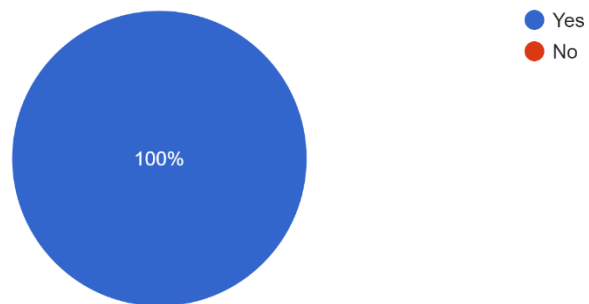
Do you consent to completing this form?

110 responses



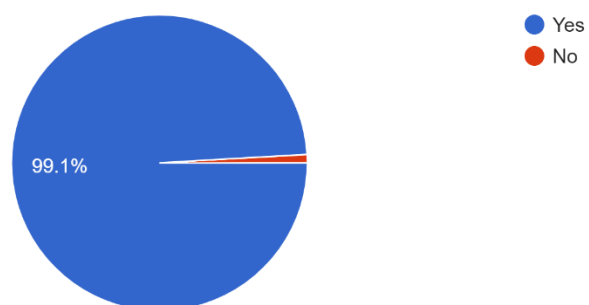
I agree to participate in the questionnaire

110 responses

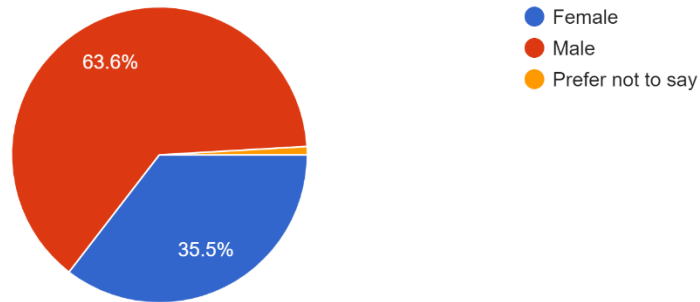


I agree that the information obtained from the questionnaire may be referenced

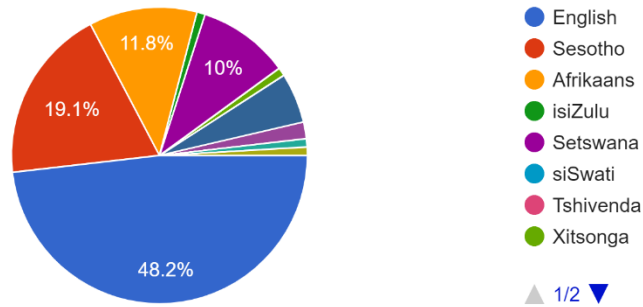
110 responses



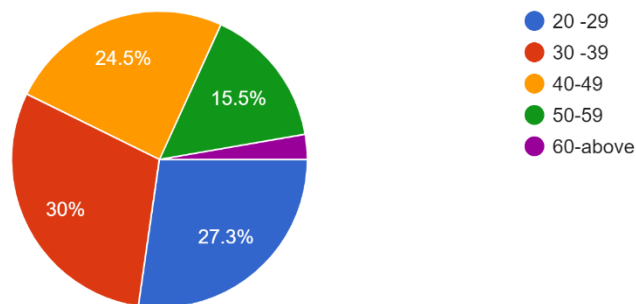
2. Gender:
110 responses



3. Language:
110 responses

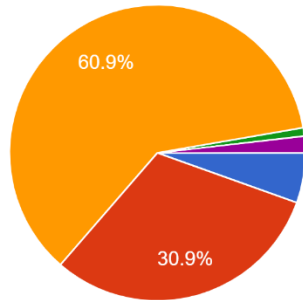


4. Age:
110 responses



5. Education:

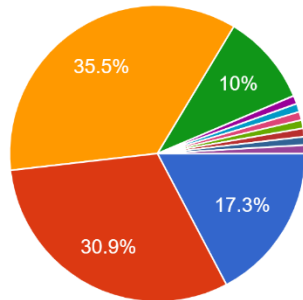
110 responses



- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Postgraduate
- None of the above
- Primary

6. Occupation/ Employment:

110 responses

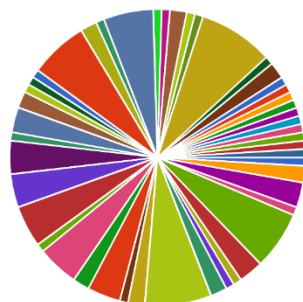


- Unemployed
- Employed in the private sector
- Employed in the government sector
- Self employed
- Lab Assistance in CUT
- Retired
- School Counsellor
- Employed at a public University

▲ 1/2 ▼

7. Suburb (area)

110 responses

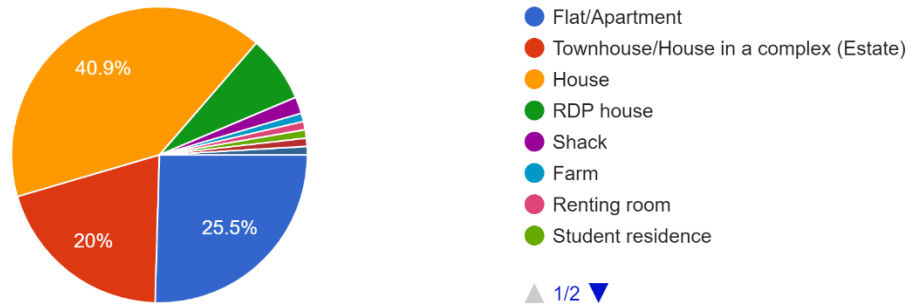


- Arboretum
- Ashbury
- Bainsvlei
- Baysvalley
- Bayswater
- Bloemdal
- Bloemindustria
- Bloemfontein Central

▲ 1/13 ▼

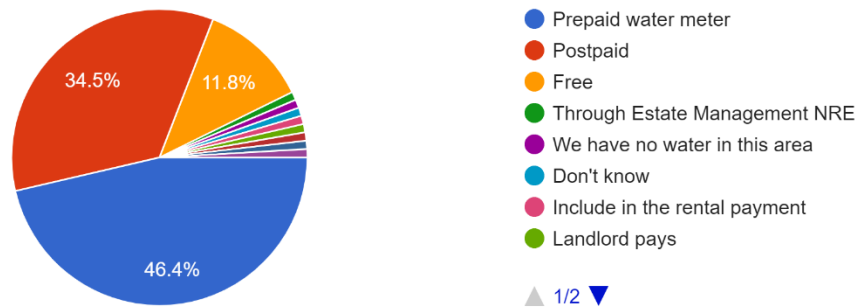
8. How do you best describe your current residence?

110 responses



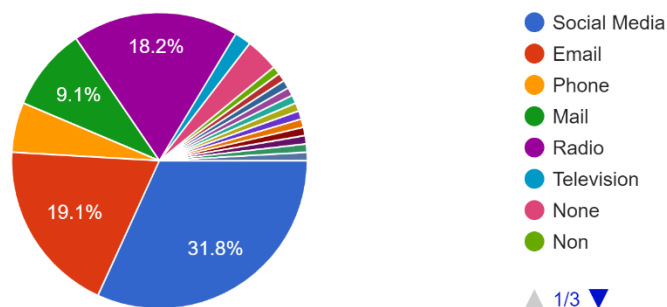
9. How do you pay for the water supplied to you by the municipality?

110 responses



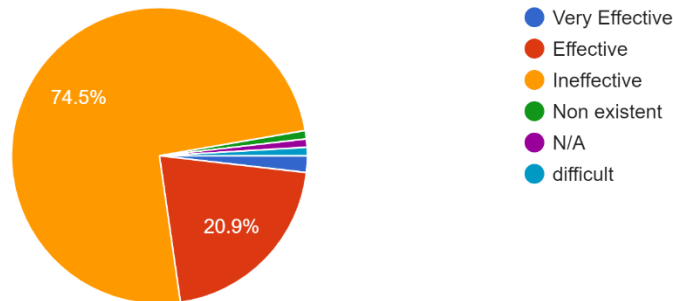
10. What mode of communication are you familiar with, that Mangaung municipality uses to communicate with its community?

110 responses



11. How effective is the communication between the municipality and the resident of Mangaung municipality?

110 responses



B) Open-ended questions and responses as collected via Google Forms

12. Please provide comments on the water services (including availability, quantity, and quality) provided by the MMM or Bloem Water to the Mangaung community in general, and to your suburb (area) in particular.

- *The water service is good in my area. But I know that there are some areas with little or no water supply.*
- *Fair.*
- *The water is clean and the quantity is OK and whenever there is any maintenance we are informed on time and the gets reconnected on the communicated times.*
- *Good supply, fair quality.*
- *Water distribution is often an issue in Pellissier where I stay. It often goes off for many days and the quality of water is questionable.*
- *Water is paid using prepaid credit and needs some purification. We se it for washing and cleaning but not for drinking ad cooking.*
- *The quality of water in Mangaung general is bad. This can be proven by establishments of water filtrations systems available in our supermarkets, informal spaza shops, garages, etc. More people are aware of the lack high quality water. Water sales data can be used to support the view.*
- *We are fortunate to have a three day reserve should the water supply fail. We only experienced a water interuption twice in the last 6 years.*

- *The water is very scarce especially on weekends. Sometimes the water comes brown or not clean.*
- *Yes they is water availability most of the time but sometimes the water is not clean.*
- *Water is readily available most of the time although pressure changes in the course of the supply. On the quality there is not much to say but that it is satisfactory.*
- *The water is not of good quality and may be unavailable without notice.*
- *Continuous lack of water supply.*
- *Good water service.*
- *Water interruptions must be eliminated.*
- *I hear people struggle in other areas of Mangaung in my area we don't really have water crisis except that we are not sure if it's safe to drink or not.*
- *Water availability is good.*
- *Very expensive. The same amount every month even if water is not used the same.*
- *Mangaung Municipality provides water services through Bloem Water which personally I think is costly as compared to if the municipality was providing water services directly through a municipal unit or department. Another point is that some people have no choice but to fetch their water from rivers, streams etc. from where the infrastructure is still lacking.*
- *Frequent pipe bursts affecting my area; low pressure at times; otherwise available and of satisfactory quality.*
- *no very good.*
- *I'm no more drinking the tap water because it's not well filtered. Personally, each and every time I drink it, I have a running stomach.*
- *Constant.*
- *Water is available most of time. We do experience water cuts from time to time, at awkward hours including mornings when we're preparing for work/school. In such cases, communication is received after, from whoever on a particular group chat. Pricing is also an issue, like any other commodity, price per unit and a break down of peak/off peak times should be available to communities so that people can rationalize and see where to cut usage.*

- *The quality of water is not good.*
- *Seems to be stable for the most part.*
- *Availability: almost always available except a few occasions when the supply pipe bursts & has to be repaired; Quantity: Prepaid - so it depends on one's purchase power; Quality: can not comment as I have no means to measure the chemical, physical, and biological characteristics of the water.*
- *water is available in good quantity and quality most of the times when needed.*
- *There is regular interruptions in almost every month sometimes without notice the quality of water is very poor.*
- *Always available.*
- *Still good but not as reliant as 10 years back.*
- *Its just normal for now.*
- *Water service has been okay if compared to the other suburbs. Only experience some shortages which usually occurs generally.*
- *Decent quality, decent supply.*
- *Poor.*
- *Water services are okay.*
- *Not too bad at this stage. We get affected when the pipes are damaged mostly through heavy rains.*
- *Water supply is constantly down.*
- *I always have water.*
- *Water availability is pretty unpredictable, as in the past we will be notified on the day when the water will be shut off or even no notification at all. Their timeliness on repairs are usually late, with little to no communication.*
- *Water costs are affordable and availability is excellent.*
- *The water quality is poor in our area, we have to buy purified water. We experience a lot of water cuts.*
- *The quantity is ok but the quality is poor.*
- *Some availability issues at the start of 2022 (more than 7 days total without water) due to unmaintained and old infrastructure. Water quality is generally acceptable; slightly high chlorine content.*

- *Its been some time since water has been closed around willows, recently there are no problems with water supply around willows, and i can also comment that the water is clean and drinkable.*
- *No comments.*
- *The water cut in recent days have just been too much.*
- *Municipality close the water services within a short notice.*
- *If there is supply, quality and quantity is good. Mostly available unless pipes are broken and repairs are being done.*
- *Water service is poor.*
- *Almost always available anything the quality is not the best, when the water goes however, it goes for days.*
- *Water is available yet too many burst in the streets.*
- *The water quality is bad, the tap water is sometimes brown. Water is available but not all the time.*
- *The water services are quite good, in a sense that it is always available, the quantity is virtually unlimited since we have it for free. However, the quality of the water is not quite untainted.*
- *CLEAN WATER.*
- *Availability, quality and quantity is always good.*
- *Poor water quality and its expensive.*
- *The water service is good this side of town, but sometime the water are not clean, and a always available.*
- *The water pricing is ridiculously high unnecessarily. Because you get water that gets wasted and aren't attended to, like the running water in town opposite pep store. It's been over weeks now that clean water is running and the Municipality isn't doing anything about it. Yet we get to pay the ridiculous amount. As for the quality isn't the best. I would rate it moderate.*
- *The water services provided by the municipality is good, but not excellent due to water cuts and at some point poor water quality.*
- *The water is supplied in good quantity but the quality is poor, making not a good choice for daily consumption.*
- *The water is fine, I do not complain about it.*
- *I do not drink tap water in bloem.*

- *"Now we have sewages that are blocked at my area bt we don't have flashing toilets yet, and we use street taps for water.*
- *Availability is excellent, but the quality is highly questionable.*
- *Resident of some areas in Mangaung complain of not having constant water supply.*
- *The quality of water supply is clean water.*
- *During the day our water is dirty can't be used to drink and cook.*
- *We don't have issues with water supply just with sewerage.*
- *The water usage is low however, the amount is too much.*
- *We receive poor water service and sewage services.*
- *Ba sisokolisa nga manzi [We don't get good water services].*
- *Ba dula ba re kwalela metsi beke enngwe le enngwe [They shut off our water supply almost every week].*
- *One kry nie goeie diens van maspal af nie. Onse water is nie altyd beskikbaar nie [We don't get good service from the municipality. Our water is not always available].*
- *Unexpectedly and suddenly without water, only to receive reasons for having no water later (too late) also not keeping to set out time frames for having no water.*
- *Water is available but not always of good quality.*
- *Acceptable.*
- *The water is fine.*
- *Not good at all.*
- *Available.*
- *Available.*
- *The water quality is not good at all that I have to buy drinking water.*
- *Very poor.*
- *Water is in a good quality now.*
- *Very poor.*
- *Waiting over a month for MMM to replace water meter.*
- *I would say that water is available 90 to 95% of the time. If there was maintenance the water is dirty.*

- *We always have water. Sometimes of poor quality (with regards to colour and smell).*
- *Mostly good. Minimum water shortage. Quality should improve.*
- *The water tariffs are expensive and currently availability not so good.*
- *We are supplied with water on a regular basis, however when the MMM faces challenges, this affects us immensely.*
- *28/07/2022 we do not have water in Lourierpark.*
- *Their communication regarding the water crisis is very poor,*
- *Quality of water sometimes not drinkable.*
- *Availability sometime is periodical.*
- *Bad with broken pipes.*
- *Many people are no longer using municipality water, they buy water for drinking including me.*
- *Can't complain.*
- *The water services are good is just that the water is not to clean and needs boiling to be drank.*
- *We regularly have water in Fichardtpark, the challenge is the water in not clean at all.*
- *The area where I am stsyng always has water, even when there us communication passed around on social media that there will be no water supply, in our area it takes time for the water to become scares or unavailable, there is water available even if it comes out slowly from the tap or not as normally as it usually comes out.*
- *None.*
- *The degree of water services as provided by municipality may be described as above average.*
- *They use those Sub contract to pay the water.*
- *Water shortages and pipe bursts.*
- *The quality is poor the looks sandy/dirty most of the time the flow is normal and availability is 90%.*
- *The water quantity have decrease even the pressure has decreased.*

- *The water quality is very horrible, in my household we don't drink tap water unless it's boiled. Practically, we are paying double for the water because we must buy purified water.*
 - *Water is available, with periodic shutdowns.*
 - *Very poor communication and we get some semblance of true information from friends than from the municipality itself. Their communication department is totally non-existent to say the least.*
 - *The water quantity have decrease even the pressure has decreased.*
 - *The water quality is very horrible, in my household we don't drink tap water unless it's boiled. Practically, we are paying double for the water because we must buy purified water.*
 - *There is lack of water supply, and the water is not clean enough.*
13. Please provide comments on the main challenges you are facing when communicating with the MMM or Bloem Water related to water services.
- *There is very little and slow feedback when queries are sent to the municipality*
 - *Non existant.*
 - *None whatsoever.*
 - *Do not really get through calls.*
 - *Not effective communication.*
 - *The municipality delays to respond to our concerns.*
 - *I personally don't think of communicating with Bloem Water. Complex managers communicate directly with Bloem Water*
 - *We have not yet communicated with them directly. We have a dedicated Water division at Woodlands that adresses our concerns via MMM*
 - *The right people to communicate with are not available.*
 - *They are no communication with municipality service.*
 - *A quick turnaround would be appreciated.*
 - *Havent been in such a situation.*
 - *We don't get the messages in time.*
 - *The take long time to respond to challenges.*
 - *I don't know who to call.*

- *I am not facing major challenges except that sometimes queues are very long when I go to their office to enquire about our bill.*
- *Average challenges.*
- *Haven't communicated.*
- *No response to explain the exorbitant water bill, especially where no records of the actual readings are immediately available to ascertain how much the actual bill for that particular month is based on estimated consumption.*
- *Call centre telephone going unanswered; not easy to report problems.*
- *Calls not attended to.*
- *They are not available most of the time.*
- *difficulty to pass my message to them.*
- *Communication is random, from anyone in a particular group chat whom may have the information first. Water is cut, then communities are somehow informed.*
- *Very difficult.*
- *No feedback or only after problem has been solved after some time.*
- *I have never experienced any challenges with water services.*
- *I hardly communicate with the municipality regarding water services.*
- *Most the only communication received is the invoice. No other communication.*
- *I have no communication with municipality regarding water.*
- *No real office communication but understandable in the current milue.*
- *The long response time in resolving problems.*
- *We communicate with the building's cooperate body but in the past there was a huge challenge with communicating and customer ms will have to go queue at their office to get things done*
- *There is NO way to get hold of them. They do not answer emails or phones*
- *No effect.*
- *Sometimes they close water without informing us before hand.*
- *None.*
- *Do not communicate at all, everything is discussed with GPF groups.*
- *None.*

- *They (MMM) provide an update to our contacts in the whatsapp group (DA chairman for Pellissier) and he keeps us updated, but after the updates when he tries to reach them for further details, there is very little chance of getting in contact.*
- *I am not aware of the right communication channel to use.*
- *They don't communicate with us before applying water cuts or changing the prepaid supplier middle man.*
- *They don't respond.*
- *They take extremely long to respond to something like a burst pipe or leaking sewage, resulting in the waste of water and threatening the health of community members*
- *We usually communicate with the real estate and they are the one who communicate with municipality.*
- *No comments.*
- *Nobody to interact with.*
- *There is no proper communication between us and municipality as they unnoticeably shut down the water.*
- *No answering of telephones.*
- *I've never tried communicating.*
- *I can't trust their water.*
- *Burst pipes.*
- *They do not reply to emails and calls.*
- *The main challenge over here is that there is not much of a communication channel. Which causes us to buy decent water to drink.*
- *None I am renting.*
- *Method of communication is outdated.*
- *It's expensive.*
- *Sometime water are not clean.*
- *Time, you wait for quite a very long time before you get assisted with the challenge you have reported.*
- *There are no communication channels, only the municipality communicates to us, not us communicating with the municipality (No direct communication channel for water related issues).*

- *Information are either gotten from the caretaker of the premises or from social, this kind of communication is not efficient.*
- *They do not communicate to customers when a problem might be occurring.*
- *The water sometimes has things in it and I don't know how to communicate because no one ever answers.*
- *They always promising to come and fix everything bt it doesn't come to pass.*
- *None.*
- *The complaints are not being addressed with urgency.*
- *No response from the municipality.*
- *They don't come fast when you need them.*
- *None.*
- *No response.*
- *We don't receive communication in time.*
- *ipipe nxa ivuza aba zi lungisi nge xesha [They don't repair leaking pipes in time].*
- *Ba kwala metsi ba sa re tsebisa [They shut off our water without telling us].*
- *Maspal praat nie saam met ons as hulle die water kom toe maak nie [The municipality doesn't communicate with us when stopping the water supply].*
- *Not even getting through to service providers not even to mention the Municipality never having answers.*
- *Not always receiving communication back from Bloemwater and MMM*
- *MMM does not inform residents on time for tariff increase and reasons for such increase.*
- *I haven't tried.*
- *We have no water.*
- *If there are any inconvenience regarding water supply, we do not get a notice in time.*
- *Most of the time unavailable.*
- *I don't communicate with them direct.*
- *Not communicating at all.*
- *None.*
- *Very poor.*

- *They don't act.*
- *Recently we had a break in supply and it took almost a week to fix and clean water was running in the street for about 5 days. Very sad story. What a waist. Had a reference number but little was done till political party got involved.*
- *too expensive.*
- *Do not attempt to communicate with them.*
- *Do not necessarily communicate to them directly but based on experience, they usually take time to respond to enquiries.*
- *There is no communication to the MMM. Communication is one way mainly. Water is not guaranteed to drink straight from the tap.*
- *It is a one way communication but our ward councillor is very effective in a community whatsapp group and attends to most of our queries. Anyway, Lourierpark is very small.*
- *Unable to use bathroom and to cook as well.*
- *I haven't communicated with them regarding water issues, usually they send out a message about their plan of action and at that point it is not debatable.*
- *Delayed response.*
- *They don't respond.*
- *Loadshedding.*
- *They may take some time to respond on the requests.*
- *The main challenge is that either they don't answer their phones or they respond according to their terms not to the needs.*
- *Currently I am not having any challenges in this regard. I think the area where I am staying does not struggle a lot because it is closer to Pelonomi Hospital. And *I think* that water supply in the hospitals and their surrounding areas is/are never interrupted.*
- *None.*
- *I am yet to witness any challenge impeding my communication with the Municipality or Bloem Water with regard to water-related services.*
- *Buy water using the prepaid the unit are to small.*
- *No communication.*
- *No response.*

- *The municipality cannot communicate, communication is a two way stream. When I have a query with the municipality, they are unreachable either by phone, email or in person. It's a typical government institution where people work at their own terms.*
- *The queues are long and the service is very slow. It is therefore better to call since the response time, in my experience, is 24 to 48 hours.*
- *Lack of or actually no communication is my main challenge as I'm unable to plan accordingly.*
- *The municipality cannot communicate, communication is a two way stream. When I have a query with the municipality, they are unreachable either by phone, email or in person. It's a typical government institution where people work at their own terms.*
- *The challenge is that we need to go to the office for our complaints regarding water so transport is sometimes a problem.*

14. What do you think may be the causes of communication challenges between the MMM and Mangaung residents regarding water services?

- *The communication channel is not adapted anymore to the current technological progress. Maybe the people in charge of the communication at the municipality side have not upgraded their skills or are not aware of what is needed on the resident side. Communication channels such as complaints telephone numbers or emails do not serve their purposes.*
- *Transparency.*
- *The communication is very effective so I don't have any challenges.*
- *Systems (better channels/systems are needed).*
- *Poor service delivery.*
- *The municipality facility and employees are not well equipped with the modern technology for effective communication.*
- *Lack of accountability for the services, incompetent staff etc. Communications is possible if the Municipality is willing to communicate, in this case, they do not want to.*

- *I have seen that Mangaung has posted notifications on social media, but I some of my friends have said that the communication is typically delayed, i.e delayed notification after water interruption.*
- *They send people instead of them showing up and listening to the community. They don't understand because they are not affected by the same problem.*
- *Because the municipality don't have any communication with us and we also don't know who to call if we have challenge with water.*
- *I think that not everyone at the Municipality is well versed in their roles or responsibility.*
- *Nigligience of the community by the municipality.*
- *They don't know what is happening so they can't let the residents be informed in time.*
- *It could the worker attitude, under staff, or propane communication channel.*
- *Non visibility.*
- *Lack of transparency.*
- *Lack of communication.*
- *I don't know.*
- *Poor governance and accountability issues in local government, for example, employees start work at 9h00am and by 11h00am they knock off. Employment of friends and families who lack the technical knowledge, skill and expertise necessary to perform core operational and financial functions. Another issue is the high level of political interference and corruption which leads to tension within municipalities. Lastly, the old pipes result in improper functioning of wastewater treatment works as they need to be fixed from time to time.*
- *I do not know; maybe understaffing? frequent industrial action by employees?*
- *They must answer calls and send out communication in time on all media platforms.*
- *Accountability.*
- *i dont know.*

- *We don't know, something needs to be done internally to streamline communication. Everyone almost has a cellphone, they can reach out to us anytime.*
- *Suggestions are not taken in consideration.*
- *Methods of communication and not readily accessible information to state how to contact.*
- *I have never experienced any challenges with water services. Hence have not had the need to communicate with Mangaung municipality in regards to water services.*
- *there is no structure for such communication.*
- *They don't feel pressure to lose customers because they are the only service provider they don't have competitors.*
- *Municipality is not listening.*
- *No comment.*
- *The slow response in resolving problem.*
- *Lack of staffs for customer services. Absence of penalties for poor service delivery and corruption.*
- *No motivation or willingness to help.*
- *Do not know.*
- *No idea.*
- *Not sure.*
- *No challenges, they simply do not exist!*
- *The only change I am aware of is that municipality uses a radio as a mode of communication which isn't effective to all residents*
- *There is not a main communication medium where constant updates are given. Person responsible for updates are not pushing the notifications through. Problem is bigger than anticipated and does not want to let the public know the full extent of the issue.*
- *The community might not be aware of the right communication channel to use.*
- *Lack of staff.*
- *Poor management from Mangaung.*
- *Cadre Deployment and Corruption.*

- *The communication platforms may cause challenges, because not all people trust social media, at least use more effective platforms like emails.*
- *Not as to my understanding.*
- *Poor management.*
- *Their services are very poor and unreliable. We are not even updated who to report to.*
- *No appreciation or concern of importance of communication.*
- *We don't have much info about MMR.*
- *Lack of Technologies that can assist in achieving effective communication.*
- *Poor communication platforms.*
- *The municipality does not listen to the needs of residents and the information that the municipality is giving to the residents only gets to a few people not all.*
- *Not sure.*
- *N/A.*
- *Failure to digitise and understand it properly.*
- *Third party.*
- *Some of the residents don't pay for water and that lead the municipality with less resources.*
- *Having old people in the offices, whom aren't flexible enough to do the job.*
- *Poor planning and communication, short notice announcements and failure of the municipality to pay the service provider.*
- *A lack of frequent updates through efficient channels.*
- *Customers may be not aware that the municipality does use social media and hence do not check for update.*
- *Negligence.*
- *Maybe the economic growth, see now the petrol and paraffin are high in cost, it also disturb the flow of electricity. Thanks.*
- *Attitude of the Municipality employees.*
- *I think the Municipality seemingly struggling to put structures in place to dedicate resources to tackle challenges hence the poor communication.*
- *Inefficient communication.*
- *I don't know.*

- *Don't know.*
- *Laziness of government employees.*
- *We are not notified on time.*
- *Aba sazi si nge xesha [They don't communication with us in time].*
- *Ha ba tle matlong a rona ba tlo re tsebisa ha ba tlo kwala metsi. [They don't come to our area to notify us when they shut off the water supply].*
- *Hulle vat ons nie kop toe ons wat in die lokasie boy, ons hoor net dat die water toe is. [They don't take us seriously as residents who are staying in the township. We just hear that the water has been shut off without any notification].*
- *Stakeholders at the Municipality not being competent to be pro-active.*
- *MMM not always have the personnel to communicate with the residents.*
- *Do not know.*
- *Municipality under Admin.*
- *They don't care about the community.*
- *Whatever the communication method is used, it is not effective enough.*
- *Fair.*
- *Limited communication channels with the community.*
- *Corruption.*
- *Network as we facing crises of loadshedding.*
- *Communication can help.*
- *Incompetence.*
- *Municipality employees not held accountable for poor performance of their job? Better service is needed.*
- *poor management.*
- *Dedicated employees are not doing their work properly.*
- *Usually it is because of ignorance from the management or specialists*
- *Perhaps the inability to tend every complaint would be the reason why communication is one way.*
- *Is it bigger than us...Politics.*
- *They don't take the residents serious.*
- *Residences do not want much from the municipality besides what they should provide.*

- *Personnel competence.*
- *I suspect that the work force there is not dedicated to do their job, this may be caused by lack of relevant qualifications by staff.*
- *Public workers.*
- *The lack of taking residents seriously, they should make community meetings and address their challenges.*
- *Lack of accountability. It's no more the people first, now it's my stomach first. Secondly, they respond according to books not according to the realities on the field because of lack of physical check.*
- *A lot of people not having access to electronic communication channels, especially in the townships where I am staying.*
- *None.*
- *Although I am yet to experience any challenge as posited above, it is my belief that such challenges may be attributed to any or a combination of the following: the type of communication deployed, the acceptance of, and degree of access to such platforms by a majority of the users, the language being used and the promptitude with such communication is handled via those platforms.*
- *Is the municipal communication between the residents and mangaug to much slower even if you report it took time to be resolved.*
- *Financial.*
- *It could be they do not have a service desk.*
- *The municipality workers are not doing their part in all of this.*
- *Lack of urgency from the municipality*
- *They are quite inept in what they're doing in general, so communication is least of their worries in all fairness. They simply take it that we would understand whatever service they're dishing us.*
- *The municipality workers are not doing their part in all of this.*
- *Message is not provided in time.*

15. Please provide any suggestions that can be used to improve communication between the MMM and the residents regarding water services.

- *Dedicated and trained people must be there to manage all the possible communication channels, to respond when there is a query. This will restore the trust from the community.*
- *Regular meetings.*
- *I'm happy with the current mode of communication.*
- *Working telephone numbers, email, social media (twitter/facebook/WhatsApp).*
- *They should be more active on social media.*
- *The employees must get proper training in every department.*
- *Ward councilors should be mandated for communication. They should provide feedback on challenges all the time. In that way, records can be kept in councilor's report for future improvements/actions.*
- *Audit their current communication strategy. Define communication objectives, increase the speed at which communication is sent to residents regarding water interruptions/or planned maintenance so that residents are not caught off guard. Identify larger social media platforms to reach all residents, twitter, intagram, whatsapp, etc. Also make use of sms services to directly message residents about potential water interuptions.*
- *Mangaung Municipality must avail themselves in community meetings and community more via radio stations.*
- *To select the right people that can work and communicate with us.and make sure that those people can do their job and also mantain the water services.*
- *Provide clear communication channels for enquiries and another for emergencies.*
- *Any registered person for water service must atleast recieve an sms. As well as notices on kocal radio*
- *Better informed staff and less incompetent workers that are put in the communication department.*
- *The could proper call center.*
- *Call centre must be maintained.*
- *Notifications can be send to people's phones like they did when COVID 19 started.*
- *There should always be updates.*

- *Have none.*
- *There is a need for good governance and accountability to improve municipal functioning. Employment of people with the relevant skills and expertise to perform what is expected of them and hold them accountable for non-performance. Replace old pipes for the proper functioning of wastewater treatment works. Relevant structures to work on alternative interventions to ease the political tensions within most of the municipalities.*
- *Proper staffing of contact centres and timely response to problems.*
- *with social network.*
- *Each and everybody must be accountable on his/her area of responsibility.*
- *phone calls..sms...pamphlets.*
- *They can borrow from the covid campaign for example and send out blanket sms or whatsapp meesages in case water outages or any other information necessary.*
- *Reach out and to know the need of the people and the quality of water that the municipality supplies.*
- *Read the emails sent and have clearer methods of communication.*
- *I have not encountered any communication challenges with Mangaung Municipality. Therefore, I can not provide any suggestions in that regard.*
- *The municipality can start a whatsapp page or have a consumer toll free number dedicated to consumers to lodge complains regarding their services.*
- *They should increase their way of communication radio, television news papers have regular meeting in different areas to explain their responsibilities and the community refponsabilities.*
- *No idea.*
- *None.*
- *I thing it will be better to divide the technical team according to sections (small areas) and make the communities to know of their offices.*
- *Social media, such as WhatsApp could be effective and affordable. They may adopt the use of customer management App that has features such as fault and issues logging with the aim to attend customers timely and effectively.*

- *Dedicated and supervised helpdesk.*
- *Pay Bloem Water and there will be less to worry about.*
- *Use all platforms such as SMS, emails, social media, radio to communicate with the Mangaung residents*
- *customer service call center for townships, suburbs, squatter camps etc.*
- *Appoint competent people.*
- *To try and use different mode of communication at all times and avoid using 1 or few modes of communicating to residents.*
- *"Provide a main source for updates for the public to see, either a facebook page dedicated to the specific area/category of information.*
- *Whatsapp group/business profile which people could join where only the MMM could post and people could obtain information straight from them.*
- *Appoint knowledgable employees who could provide timely updates on the situation at hand.*
- *A mobile application can help improve the communications.*
- *They should use SMSs' to update us.*
- *MMM should open more communication channels and be transparent in their communication.*
- *Elect officials who actually care about their jobs and are interested in what they do. They serve the community, not the other way around.*
- *Community meeting.*
- *Active social media.*
- *In time announced regarding water.*
- *No comments.*
- *The municipality need to create or revisit its digital media team current team is slow.*
- *They need to form a group social platform such as watts-app to send urgent information to the community of Bloemfontein.*
- *WhatsApp and email.*
- *I think if we can have access to call direct to MMM.*
- *Know your clients service providers like MTN, Vodacom know how where everyone is. Try using channels like these to know who to contact.*
- *Use all social media platforms available to the residents.*

- *I think the best communication strategy will be social media and also the news which can be Radio.*
- *Using a communication channel such as sms will be much of help, or perhaps make an app for broadcasting.*
- *Proper communication.*
- *Digitisation.*
- *Flat owners should be transparent of water usage and billing.*
- *I think if the municipality can check who are the people that pay and who doesn't.*
- *Involve unemployed youth into the sector. When receiving a complaining address at that moment and time without any delays to avoid having alot of things to do in a short space of time which end up in failure of service delivery.*
- *To better improve the water services, usage and communication between the municipality, residents and Bloem Water, various social media accounts and websites could be adopted and accessible for information sharing, notices and reports (Usage, leaks/ pipe blast/ targets/ demand/ water levels/ storage etc). This could also provide the municipality and Bloem Water the platform to encourage good water usage practices and more...*
- *A website dedicated only to the municipality updates can help residents have direct access to the most recent updates.*
- *TV campaigns or social media awareness to remain customers of ways to communicate with the municipality.*
- *Put an active call center.*
- *They should provide jobs to relevant People then I think all things will go well.*
- *Use of Whatsapp to a publicly available number like the one that is used for COVID-19 by the government.*
- *I think the Mangaung Municipality could find effective ways such as whatsapp platforms,physical meetings,radio stations to communicate and give directives on their plans to deliver effective water services and implement them.*
- *Social media and regular meetings.*

- *They must clean the water regularly.*
- *Openeness.*
- *Have a tracking system to monitor how fast the queries are attended to.*
- *They must come to our township during communication.*
- *Ba sazise nge xesha apha sihlala khona [They must notify us on time in our location as residences].*
- *Ba tle ho rona ba tlo re jwetse ka nako ha ba tlo kwala metsi hore re seke ra sokola metsi [They must come and notify us in advance before they close the water supply so that we don't struggle to get the water].*
- *Hulle moet na ons toe kom om vir ons betyds laat weet met die loudspeaker, laat ons die water kan skep [They need to come to our township in order to notify us in advance using the loudspeaker so that we can collect water].*
- *All planned/unplanned disruptions to be communicated in advance with ward leaders and then distributed to the people , improved social media presence and efficacy.*
- *Personnel to be equipped/trained to communicate with the residents.*
- *Use more than one communication channels.*
- *Employ qualified workers not friends.*
- *Choose good political leaders.*
- *I am not sure of the platform they use but posting such matters on social media will be beneficial to the community as a lot of people are on social platforms.*
- *Communication.*
- *They should consider using different communication methods to reach majority of the people.*
- *Technology must be implemented.*
- *Letter information a week before.*
- *Communication will help during cut off of water.*
- *Coup d'état.*
- *Ticket system that either runs via email or sms updating the customer the status of query or fault that will enable to see progress or if escalating is needed.*
- *Privatise electricity, water, refuge pickup and other service delivery.*

- *Focus on improved social media approach to communicating issues. An improved app for phones will be very useful.*
- *Create a very active website that can allow direct contact with the community or alternatively, have a “help-desk” that works 24/7.*
- *Just ask the residents what they need. Have a backup supply to assist people.*
- *A two way communication which may include more focus on responding on social media platforms.*
- *They should extend their mode of communication so that everyone can be aware of the situation especially those who reside in locations.*
- *Direct Communication and not broad.*
- *Training and employment of the right candidates.*
- *They should use different communications ways, email, sms, WhatsApp etc.*
- *Minimizing of leaking pipes and taps.*
- *They could try to use social media and formal meetings to put residents on ease.*
- *It's just a mindset, if everyone can be at his/her post and do the job that he or she employed for. Then offices and go in the field, it will help a lot.*
- *Local radio station announcements. Most people in the townships are unemployed and they mostly listen to local and national radio stations throughout the day. Announcements in the free local newspapers like express and others will also help.*
- *None.*
- *To improve communication, efforts should be made to explore the causes of the challenges presented in the preceding question and to resolve them accordingly.*
- *Install the system that can communicate between supplyrics meter and resident and municipality or app.*
- *Payment of debts.*
- *Communicate via social media more frequently.*
- *The municipality must implement a system where complaints, queries and problems can be logged and addressed accordingly in due time.*

- *The municipality should endeavour to make the queues faster.*
- *They need to utilize media platforms in their disposal to articulate whatever challenges they're facing than letting us just to figure out ourselves.*
- *The municipality must implement a system where complaints, queries and problems can be logged and addressed accordingly in due time.*
- *What's and loudspeaker can help.*

Appendix 2: Interview with Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality representatives

Permission and consent to participate in research: “Exploring the mode of communication used by the stakeholders of the water service sector of the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality (MMM)”

You are hereby asked to participate in a research study conducted by a master’s student in Language Practice.

I would like to talk to you about the mode of communication used by the stakeholders of the water services sector of the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality (MMM).

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the mode of communication used between those responsible for water services in the MMM and between the MMM and the community.

It is known that water has for quite a long time been a big problem in terms of quality and regularity, and because of that, the community of the MMM is affected negatively and have developed a negative perception of the MMM.

I hope that at the end of this research I will be able to suggest some communication strategies that can help the MMM to rebuild the community’s trust and to have a better relationship with its community.

Procedure

Your participation will involve the following:

- Questions about the mode of communication used by the stakeholders of the water services sector of the MMM.
- The researcher will ask you the survey questions in the form of an interview or will give you a questionnaire paper to answer freely in your own time.
- You will need to sign the consent form before starting the interview to protect your rights.

Possible benefits to society

Society will not receive any direct benefits such as material or payment; however, the knowledge that will emerge from this research will assist to improve communication and regain the community's trust.

Potential risks and discomfort

No risks or discomfort are associated with participating in the research. No person will be harmed or negatively impacted if they do not participate in the study.

Respondent 1

1. What is the mode of communication at the MMM?

"We are using different platforms, particularly when we are communicating with external stakeholders, but internally, telephone, emails, and meetings are the most convenient. Externally we have social media."

2. What do you think of the MMM's mode of communication?

"It is effective, it reaches all the relevant stakeholders."

3. What kind of relationship does the MMM have with Bloem Water?

"It is not cordial; the problem lies with the decision makers. They do not create a platform where they can be able to encourage a cordial and mutual relationship."

4. What is the mode of communication between the MMM and community?

"It depends. Remember, communities are expecting services from the municipality but also, they may not be [privy] to some of the internal dynamics, particularly on the issues of budget, so as a result as much as we are providing services, we may not necessarily meet some of their demand, so the mode of communication existing between the MMM and the community is dynamic, and it has to be improved almost daily so that we can bridge the gap of understanding between ourselves and to the society or community."

5. How do you receive feedback from the community after sending information?
“We get feedback through our social media platform, through electronic newspapers, through meetings and through work by members of the community, through the media, public participation, through interperson and political leadership, through some of the responses we get as the result of certain projects.”
6. How do you know the needs of the community?
[No response].
7. Do you consider language while sending information to the community, as multiple languages are spoken by the MMM community?
“It depends. We have the community representatives, we are also making sure that there are representatives that interact with them, depending on the subject.”
8. Do you consider language while sending information to the community, as multiple languages are spoken by the MMM community?
“Yes, we have about four official languages; we try Afrikaans, English, Sotho, and Xhosa.”
9. With the evolution of technology, it is easy to communicate via social media; however, there are still many people who do not use social media. How do you communicate with them?
“It is very easy to communicate, but we still also continue to use our traditional ways of communication.”
10. How do you get in touch with illiterate people?
“Through meetings, through public meetings, but it is a bit difficult now during the pandemic but we try our level best and that our councillors also do their part in the different parts because they are more accessible than any other person to close the communication gap.”

11. Are there precautions that the MMM takes for the future concerning water quality and water shortages?

“We are in constant communication with engineering services that are responsible for overseeing the quality of water and if there is anything related to quality of water, it is easy to communicate with the community and let them know in time.”

12. Do you think that the MMM's communication is effective?

“Yes, our communication is effective.”

13. What do you do to improve the communication?

“We try to be innovative, we try to participate in different forums, communication forums, we try to source the voice of the people so that we improve on our communication practices. We listen to what are the comments of communities and in fact radio and community media have been able to assist us during the pandemic because we have Sotho that are predominant and we convey a lot of information through the radio at the moment, more than any other platform, so that is part of our traditional media. We have different methods, we use many ways. We used to source if our communication is still effective, but I can tell you now that at the level of provinces, we don't have competition.”

14. What are the responsibilities of the Department of Communication at the MMM?

“We are playing an advertising communication role. We assist every department within the city with communication. We are responsible for anything communication, whether you are talking branding, advertising, daily communication, dealing with enquiries, progressing content, processing electronic publications, just ensuring that the image of institution is upright. Also managing some of the external stakeholders, both internal stakeholders so that we can close the communication gap.”

15. What is the MMM's position on the inadequate infrastructure that is affecting the quality of water and causing water shortages?

"The issue of infrastructure has history, it is a history that comes from apartheid era when the city was very small, but gradually we are beginning to close that infrastructure gap where if, for example, we have a problem with a pipe, when we repair that pipe, we repair it with the material that is durable and so when we do the township establishment, we make sure that the infrastructure that is going to be there it life long, the life span of that infrastructure is quite reasonable so that we don't go back and ... but generally, whatever plan that they are looking of improving the underground infrastructure, it is the water infrastructure."

16. What kind of communication is used to improve the MMM's image among clients that have had negative experiences with Bloem Water and the MMM?

[No response].

17. The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) has established a set of objectives for itself; do you think that the MMM has reached its goal or is on its way to?

"Look, either we are a city, we are not necessarily dependent on another province or the department. Some of the things we do them straight through our budget and with the national Treasury, but obviously there are not intergovernmental relations that we need to attend to, so at the level of other stakeholders, the water department and our water entity, we sit down and plan together, and I think in terms of development of the infrastructure we have a common vision. We make sure that we give people the quality of infrastructure where there can be multiple service, so by saying we may not be there, but we are getting there."

18. At times the community receives WhatsApp messages from the MMM that inform them of situations that may occur concerning water. How do you communicate with people who do not use the application?

"Through the radio as our traditional way of informing."

19. Did the MMM and/or Bloem Water offer support after members of the population fell ill because of the poor water quality? I read that SALGA wrote about

Mangaung saying that there was *E. coli* that was found in the water you were providing and people got sick from it.

“Look, we have our own testing facility as the city. If there was such a case, you would have found that it happened maybe where there was underreporting, but generally once there is doubt related to our water quality, we always rush that to our own lab and immediately improve the quality but in case when you find that there was a pipe burst, the system is not clear enough, then we always issue out a notice of communication that says please pour a little bit of Jik to the water that you will be taking so that the water clears and after some time people will see that the quality of water is good, but I must say, comparatively, in the Free State, our quality is quite good, you know.”

20. Does the community complain about water quality?

*“Look, when there were complaints, it is when there was a leak or a burst and people find that the water is still brown, not clear, but the issue around *E.coli* in the water, it is well managed, I must say.”*

21. What do you think about the relationship between the MMM and the community?

“Well, it depends. If you look at the country, the most sphere of government that is exposed is municipalities and the demands that are faced by the government are first felt by the municipality because it is the first that is close to the people and so, yes, we do have our own challenges but basic services have been delivered to communities. We can talk about electricity and water, those are one of our basic services we deliver. Yes, there are times when you will find that we don’t meet our schedule, particularly on waste collection, all the time but that is always been communicated and we try to work hand in hand with communities. Communities may not be happy generally in South Africa but we are trying to play our part as the city and ensuring that where there are hiccups, we communicate them in advance, we notify them. It is always better if you are not happy but you know where the problem is, and this is what we are doing, as communication of Mangaung together with our communities.”

22. What kind of complaints are received from clients?

“Obviously, it is basic services. With the schedules of waste sometimes, when the pipe burst is there and they are taking too long to repair it, the people will ask us and say we don’t see enough water tanks and all that. The issue of rate and taxes, when people cannot afford those, we refer them to the indigent offices where they are filling forms and the benefits from the scheme of the municipality. You also find us who are earning but to fill that rate and taxes, unfortunately it is something is beyond the control of the municipality because that is through the legislation, then another structure of government that are, for example electricity through the NERSA, that determine the tariffs.”

Respondent 2

1. What is the mode of communication at the MMM?

“In MMM, we have info and that where we populate information and that info is linked to some radio like SABC, OFM... but if it comes to push, if there is a need, the person responsible for communication will go on radio, TV, to make people aware of what we do.”

2. What do you think of the MMM’s mode of communication?

“Well, it is informative in such a way that even people who are far outside MMM radio stations, they are still getting that information, so even the Department of Water Affairs is still getting information, so it is quite bright.”

3. What kind of relationship does the MMM have with Bloem Water?

“Well, you know, if you are a customer, between customer and a client or a service provider and a client, there will be some hiccups, especially if there is a water case, especially if they are issues of rates that will affect the community, because Mangaung, remember it does not have a fiscus which can generate revenue, so the relationship between Mangaung and Bloem Water is very important in such a way that the two entities come around the table to ensure they come with the cost effective solution, that means that water has to be cheap, is one of the resources that must be cheap in the community, water should be affordable to attract investment for job creation. If water is expensive, that means we are limiting job creation and investors.”

4. What is the mode of communication between the MMM and the community?
“As indicated, we are using radios stations and televisions, and the pamphlet as well.”
5. How do you receive feedback from the community after sending information?
“The responsible person of communication got a lot of WhatsApps, info on Facebook on the Mangaung service delivery page. So that is the couple of modes that we have.”
6. How do you know the needs of the community?
“Community of Mangaung are not quiet people, they always shout out if things don’t go their way.”
7. Does the community have a representative who speaks on their behalf to the MMM?
“Yes, they have got councillors, they even have different stakeholders who can take the matter up and if the stakeholders cannot do it, they do it by themselves.”
8. Do you consider language while sending information to the community, as multiple languages are spoken by the MMM community?
“Yes, especially in Mangaung the dominant language is Sotho, so other languages they are just substitution, to say it can be translated here and there but most people who are living here are Sotho-speaking community.”
9. With the evolution of the technology, it is easy to communicate via social media; however, there are still many people that do not use social media. How do you communicate with them?
“We have got loudspeaker municipal vehicles going around telling people about the meetings, informing people about the water case, informing people about the electricity. Things like that.”
10. How do you get in touch with illiterate people?
“By radio and meetings.”

11. Are there precautions that the MMM takes for the future concerning water quality and water shortages?

“You know Mangaung currently is busy with contingencies that involve preventative measures to ensure that in future there will be recycling water reuse to ensure that the water that is being used can be reused for better treatment, also to ensure that it improves the quality and also becomes cheap. We are only dependent on the rivers, which is raw water, which is natural water, so if we have recycled water, that means 80% or 60% of that water will be reused and therefore you guys who used to have water cut, there will not be interruptions because there will be substitution or alternative supply.”

12. Do you think that the MMM's communication is effective?

“Of course is effective, because we don't see a lot of complaints like other cities.”

13. What do you do to improve the communication?

“The only thing that is needed is only if things can go according to Mangaung is to ensure that there are more Wi-Fis where people can get free access to other areas. If it will be like that, therefore communication will be better because everyone will be on that Wi-Fi and will get information. In Mangaung now, in the city, in the CBD [central business district], there is free Wi-Fi. Students are getting it, so that improved, that means people, if they want to get information, they can just go to town and sit somewhere around the Hoffman Square and get the information.”

14. What are the responsibilities of the Department of Communication at the MMM?

“Is to ensure that community is aware of anything that is happening around Mangaung space or in the sphere of the department, especially where Mangaung as the metro is involved. Communication is there to ensure that information reaches people, even those who don't have smartphones or to those who only have radios or televisions.”

15. What is the MMM's position on the inadequate infrastructure that is affecting the quality of water and causing water shortages?

“Well, also the age of infrastructure of course, especially if we keep on changing the chemicals, it will have some impact but remember, it is not a bad quality. If it complies with the disinfection rate, it doesn’t if it complies with the standard SANS [South African National Standards] 241 it won’t have any impact, but it is just here and there where it will change colour and after a while the water will be clear again.”

16. What kind of communication is used to improve the MMM’s image among clients that have had negative experiences with Bloem Water and the MMM?

“We are utilising radio to ensure that we clear our name and also to prove to the community that we are not selling water as a profit, we are not an organisation that needs profit. Bloem Water has profit, that is why we are fighting for Mangaung community, to ensure that if Bloem Water does this, it will hit the community, so who is going to suffer? It’s the community. We must clear our name to those people who are not aware of our problem and don’t know who is Bloem Water and who is Mangaung, so Bloem Water is a service provider and Mangaung is both service provider and authority.”

17. The Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) has established a set of objectives for itself; do you think that the MMM has reached its goal or is on its way to?

“To be honest, the Department of Water and Sanitation is not giving enough support to local authorities like Mangaung, so this question is quite awkward. Some objectives, they need strategies, they need to comply with strategies from the Department of Water and Sanitation, so we need assistance from them but if they distance themselves, how are we going to reach some of our objectives without them?”

18. At times the community receives WhatsApp messages from the MMM that inform them of situations that may occur concerning water. How do you communicate with people who do not use the application?

“We have councillors, councillors are there, they own WhatsApp groups, they must make sure that people who don’t have WhatsApp, who don’t have smartphones... They have street committees and through that forums they

inform the community that there will be water cuts, that there will be interruptions and all that, so everyone who will have information in Mangaung if they utilised all those stakeholders.”

19. Did the MMM and/or Bloem Water offer support after members of the population fell ill because of the poor water quality? I read that SALGA wrote about Mangaung saying that there was *E. coli* that was found in the water you were providing and people got sick from it.

“I have never seen something like this from poor water. Remember, if season changes, there is viruses, also E. coli virus so that one can also cause... So if you stock water for longer in your house because you are afraid of water cuts, it increases some bugs and that will make you sick, so you need to be careful because water is like milk, that is why we have fluctuation of reservoirs. Sometimes the system cleans itself, then we get fresh water every time. So there is no way people can get sick because of poor water quality. So the poor quality is due to people who stock water and they don't do precautional remedies to ensure that the water can be utilised.”

20. Does the community complain about water quality?

“Yes, of course. People will forever complain about water quality if they don't know who is actually supplying water, especially in the area that experience pipe bursts. Yes, they will, especially during drought season, whereby we are now treating humic acid, which is mostly about adjustment. Therefore instead of giving people nothing, we rather giving them water and making them aware that this water has only a bad smell of beetroot. Not all of us like beetroot , even if you boil that water you cannot kill the smell of beetroot.”

21. What do you think about the relationship between the MMM and the community?

“Well, the relationship between Mangaung and community is a partnership so it is two issues. I won't say it bad, but I will say community of Mangaung really do love their city and they respond as soon as there are some hiccups.”

22. What kind of complaints are received from clients?

“There are a lot of complaints, we got complaints about pipe burst, meters malfunctioning, about Mangaung not communicating effectively, the price also. Where there is community, you will get complaints because it is not an ideal situation. Unfortunately we are still a developing country.”